

A FAIRY TO STAY



by

MARGARET BEATRICE LODGE

Helen Lucas Cook



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HELEN & MICHAEL
OPPENHEIMER

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Illustrated by

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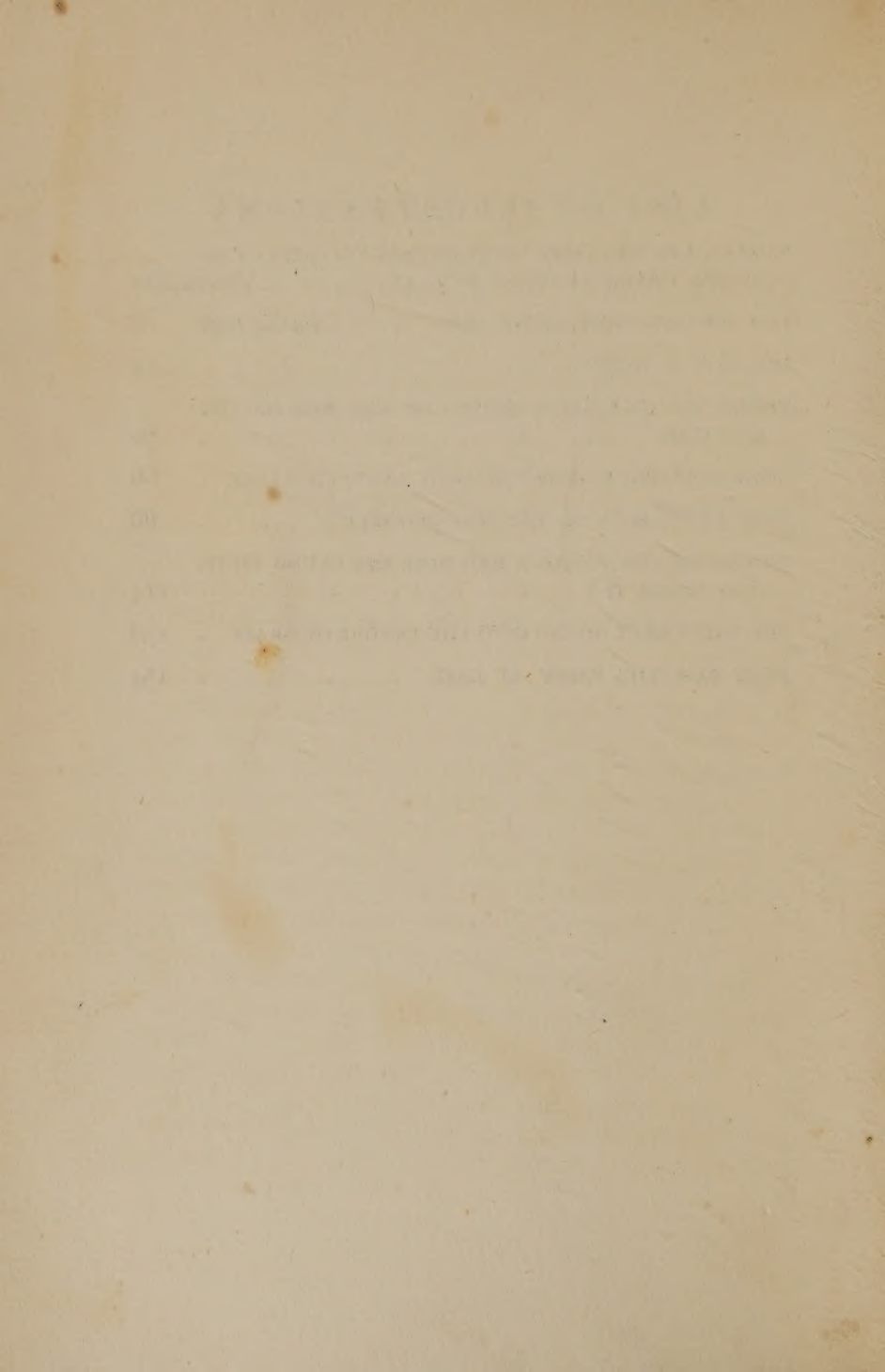
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CHAPTER I

PAMELA'S AUNTS

PAMELA PERRY lived with her Aunts in a prim red-brick house called the Laurels, in the little country town of Merlinton.

The reason why Pamela came to live with her Aunts, who did not care for children, was that her mother had died when she was a baby, and her father was somewhere far away in East Africa. Not a suitable place for little girls, was the chief thing Pamela had learnt from her Aunts about East Africa. The Laurels evidently *was* a suitable place for little girls, and Pamela sometimes thought it would be rather nice to live in not a suitable place. But she never told the Aunts so. She hardly ever told the Aunts what she thought.

She was a very little girl indeed when she first came to the Laurels, but now she was much older and bigger. Sometimes when her Aunts scolded her they said, 'A big girl like you,' or, 'Really, you are old enough to know better!' But then again they would say, 'Little girls should not speak until they are spoken to,' or, 'Little girls do *not* know everything,' and remarks like that; so Pamela felt she was a very queer betwixt-and-between kind of age, and not a very satisfactory one.

It was much nicer being very little, because then she had a kind nurse who used to play with her and tell her stories. But the time came when the nurse told Pamela she had to leave her because she was going to be married and have a home of her own. Pamela begged her not to go away and be married, but the Aunts told Pamela that was selfish. And when she cried they called it

naughty. So the nurse kissed Pamela many times, and cried a little herself, and went away.

And then the Aunts said that Pamela was too big to need a nurse any more. So Jane helped at getting-up and going-to-bed times, and there was no more fun then. And Pamela went out in the mornings with the Aunts, and in the afternoons with Jane, and there was no more fun then. And the Aunts gave Pamela lessons every morning, and there was certainly no fun *then*.

They were elderly Aunts with grey hair and faces that felt hard when you kissed them. Aunt Isabella was older than Aunt Florence, but they were both very old indeed to Pamela; older even than their brother, who was Pamela's father, and of course he was pretty old. And Jane and Cook were old too, just about as old as the Aunts. Nobody in the Laurels was young but Pamela.

Now down the road, on the same side as the Laurels, there was a school which Pamela passed every morning as she walked with her Aunts to the village shops. She would look longingly at the windows where, in term time, little girls with bobbed hair might nearly always be seen. It was the dream of Pamela's life to go to that school. She imagined it to herself every night before she went to sleep. She would have bobbed hair too, and would do her lessons with other little girls, and play games with other little girls, and sometimes go to tea at their homes. And last and best of all, she would be a Brownie. Sometimes the pack of Brownies from White House School would pass by the Laurels, all gay and jolly in their brown overalls and mushroom hats, and Pamela would stand at the window, or by the garden gate, and watch them with envy and admiration.

But Aunt Isabella and Aunt Florence disliked little girls with bobbed hair, and disliked little girls who went to school, and above all disliked Brownies. 'Modern

children,' they used to say in disgusted tones, as if that were the worst sort of thing to be.

The Aunts had lived all their lives in Merlinton, and had grown old-fashioned in the wrong way, the cross, impatient way which objects to everything new just because it is new. They did not care to know the neighbours on either side of them because they were new-comers to the place. They wore high-necked blouses and long skirts with buckled belts round their waists, because that was how people dressed when they were young, and so they had continued to dress like that ever since. And they did not care for children, because of course children are *fairly* new too! They meant to do their duty by their little niece, but they did not intend to let her be a 'modern child'. So Pamela had her hair done up in a tight pigtail, and did lessons with the Aunts, and found life very dull and lonely.

And then one day things began to happen.

It was Monday, and somehow on Monday morning things often went wrong. Pamela had an idea that it was partly the laundry-book, and partly trying to settle how Sunday's roast beef could best be cooked up again, that made Aunt Isabella and Aunt Florence so hard to please on Mondays. Aunt Isabella was the one who settled about the roast beef, and Aunt Florence the one who entered things in the laundry-book. They divided up all the household duties between them, just as they divided up the duty of teaching Pamela. Aunt Isabella taught Grammar, History, Geography, and Arithmetic. Aunt Florence taught Reading, Writing, Spelling, and a little French. She was fatter than Aunt Isabella, but less learned.

Well, perhaps the roast beef and the laundry-book made the Aunts rather cross, but it was really the Old Fairy Book that started everything.

Aunt Isabella came into the schoolroom to begin

lessons, when her eye was caught by something out of its proper place.

‘What is that book on the chair?’ she asked, pointing to a well-loved-looking book on the little chair by the window.

Pamela looked a little guilty. ‘It is Daddy’s Old Fairy Book,’ she said.

‘And what is it doing out of the book-case at this time of the morning?’ said Aunt Isabella sternly.

‘I was reading it before breakfast,’ Pamela confessed.

Aunt Isabella looked at her severely. ‘You know perfectly well, Pamela, that story books are not allowed in the morning?’

‘Yes,’ said Pamela in a small voice.

‘And yet you have been reading *fairy* stories!’ said Aunt Isabella; and from the tone of her voice you could tell what a poor opinion she had of fairies.

Pamela twisted her hands together and remained silent.

‘Give me the book,’ said Aunt Isabella.

Pamela fetched the book, and Aunt Isabella took it and turned over its pages with a look of distaste.

‘You ought not to want to read such rubbish now,’ she said. ‘These stories were all very well for your nurse to amuse you with when you were quite little, but now you ought to read about rational things, and not waste your time over nonsense.’

Pamela had no idea what rational things were, but she could not bear to hear her beautiful fairy tales called nonsense.

‘Fairy tales are not nonsense,’ she said in a low voice, but quite clearly.

‘Pamela! how dare you contradict me?’ said Aunt Isabella, gazing at her in angry surprise. ‘Fairy tales most certainly are nonsense because there are no such things as fairies.’

Pamela said nothing, but she had her own opinion about this.

'You are getting too old to think of fairies now, and I shall put this book away upstairs with your father's things,' said Aunt Isabella, laying it on one side. 'Now give me your arithmetic book, and never let me see a story book out before lessons again.'

And then lessons started. But Pamela's heart was with her beloved Fairy Book which was being taken from her, and though she tried to do her work as usual it seemed extra dull and difficult, and the Aunts found fault with her all the morning.

Suddenly, just as lessons were at an end, and Aunt Florence was finishing scolding about untidy writing, Pamela surprised herself and the Aunts by shutting up her copy-book with a flap and saying quite loud, 'I wish I could go to school!'

'You wish you could go to school!' exclaimed Aunt Isabella in an angry, astonished voice. She had just come back into the room in her outdoor things.

'You wish you could go to school!' repeated Aunt Florence, still sitting beside Pamela at the schoolroom table.

They both looked at their niece as if she had said something dreadful.

'Yes,' said Pamela, desperately.

'What has suddenly put that idea into your head?' inquired Aunt Isabella in her chilliest manner.

'I always want to,' Pamela went on, though she felt frightened at the sound of her own voice saying these things aloud. 'I don't like lessons at home.'

'Really, Pamela!' exclaimed Aunt Florence.

'You are an extremely naughty, ungrateful child!' declared Aunt Isabella. 'This is the return you make to your Aunt Florence and myself for all the time and

trouble we have taken over teaching you! I am absolutely surprised at you, Pamela!’

‘It is all nonsense!’ said Aunt Florence, indignantly. ‘Of course she is only saying she wants to go to school because I have had to find fault with her over her lessons this morning. She has been most careless. Just look at this copy!’ She handed Aunt Isabella the reopened copy-book.

Aunt Isabella looked at it. ‘A stitch in time saves nine’ appeared, with variations, all down the page. Aunt Florence always wrote Pamela’s copies, and they always said something improving like that.

‘Disgraceful!’ pronounced Aunt Isabella. ‘Every line worse than the one before! You cannot have taken any trouble over it.’

‘I did,’ said Pamela, earnestly. ‘Sometimes the more trouble I take the worse it goes.’

‘Don’t contradict me, and don’t make excuses,’ said Aunt Isabella.

Pamela looked at her helplessly. Aunts *wouldn’t* understand.

‘You have been most naughty and troublesome this morning over all your lessons,’ continued Aunt Isabella, ‘and on the top of that you have been rude as well. I am very much displeased with you. Now put up your books at once and go and get ready to come out. And let us see you behaving very differently for the rest of the day.’

Pamela hastily bundled her books together.

‘How often have I told you not to treat books like that?’ exclaimed Aunt Florence. ‘Put them in two neat piles and then place them in the cupboard.’

Pamela obeyed as well as she could, but it was difficult to do things neatly with both Aunts looking on like that.

She was just escaping through the door when Aunt Isabella summoned her back.

‘And, Pamela, remember this: we do not intend to hear another word from you in future about wishing to go to school. Your Aunt Florence and I do not approve of school for little girls, as you know very well, and while we are responsible to your father for your upbringing we shall never allow you to go.’

‘Most certainly not,’ said Aunt Florence.

CHAPTER II

PAMELA'S PIGTAIL

PAMELA went upstairs feeling as if her dream was quite shattered and spoilt.

What *could* have made her say aloud to the Aunts that she wanted to go to school? As long as she kept it as her own secret she could plan and pretend that it might really come true; but now the Aunts said 'Never'. Horrible Aunts!

She went into her little room, slammed the door, and stood in the middle of the floor thinking. Then she went up to the looking-glass and looked into it very earnestly. She saw a very cross face from which the light brown hair was tightly screwed back into a pigtail. She made a face, and the little girl in the glass certainly looked extremely plain.

'Pigtails are hideous things,' thought Pamela. 'Nobody else, hardly, has pigtails. Why should I always have to be different?' She was feeling very ill-used indeed.

She looked round, and there on the table lay Aunt Florence's big scissors, on the top of a newly cut-out nightgown.

Suddenly a dreadful and exciting idea came into Pamela's head.

'Well,' she said to herself very defiantly, 'p'raps I can't go to school! But I know what I *can* do!'

She took up the big scissors in her right hand, seized the pigtail in her left, and, screwing round her head as far as it would go, she cut, cut, cut at the top of the pigtail. It was much harder work than she expected, and the scissors hurt her hand a good deal, but she worked on with them until suddenly—the pigtail came quite off!



THE PIGTAIL
CAME QUITE OFF!

Then all at once she felt very frightened. All her anger left her. What *had* she done? What *would* the Aunts say?

She could not even take the few steps to look at herself in the glass. Then she heard some one on the stairs. Her knees felt all funny and weak suddenly. She put the pigtail down on a chair and sat on it.

'Miss Pamela! Miss Pamela! Aren't you ready yet?' That was Jane. The Aunts had sent her to see why Pamela wasn't coming down.

'Miss Pamela!' Jane flung open the door. 'Why I declare you haven't begun to get ready yet, and your Aunts all ready and waiting!' Then she gave a little scream. 'Oh! What ever *have* you been doing to your hair?'

'I've cut it off,' said Pamela in a small voice.

'Oh, you naughty child! You've been and gone and cut it off yourself! Oh, I never did!' Words failed Jane, and she stood amazed and horrified.

'Don't tell the Aunts,' said Pamela, which was not a very sensible thing to say, but then she was feeling so muddled.

'Don't tell your Aunts indeed! And how do you think they are going to miss seeing it?' said Jane, with much more reason.

'Jane! Jane!' called an impatient voice. 'Is Miss Pamela coming?' This was Aunt Florence on the stairs.

Jane hurried out on to the landing. 'Oh, Miss Florence!' she exclaimed, throwing up her hands, 'I don't know what ever you *will* say!'

'What is it? What is the matter? Is she ill?' questioned Aunt Florence, hurrying up the stairs and into the room. 'What is it, Pamela? Why are you sitting there? Pamela! What have you done to your hair? You naughty, naughty, *naughty* girl!'

Aunt Florence could not cope with such a situation

by herself. She rushed to the door. 'Isabella!' she called, 'Isabella! Please come up here at once! I don't know what has come over Pamela!'

Aunt Isabella hastened upstairs. 'What is the matter, Florence?' she said indignantly. 'What is all this commotion about? Why isn't Pamela ready?' She marched into the room.

'Look at her!' exclaimed Aunt Florence.

'She's cut her hair off!' exclaimed Jane.

'Pamela!' said Aunt Isabella in the most terrible voice that could be imagined.

Pamela began to cry.

'Pamela!' repeated Aunt Isabella, after what seemed a long, long pause. 'Did you cut your hair off?'

'Yes,' sobbed Pamela.

'You were sent up here to get ready to come out, and instead of that you cut off your hair! How *dared* you do such a thing?'

Pamela sobbed louder. Aunt Isabella sounded angrier than she had ever been before.

'How *dared* you do such a thing?'

'I don't know,' wept Pamela.

'It must have been sheer naughtiness,' exclaimed Aunt Florence.

'And done with Miss Florence's own scissors!' said Jane, as if that had made it worse. She picked up the scissors from the table and held them up to view.

'Where is the hair?' asked Aunt Florence, looking round the room as if expecting to see locks of hair in all directions.

'Where is your hair, Pamela?' said Aunt Isabella sternly.

Pamela slowly got off her chair, and there lay a funny, flat-looking little pigtail with a squashed brown bow at the end of it.

Aunt Florence pounced on it and held it up. 'Just look at that!' she said.

Pamela looked, and even through her tears could not help thinking that it looked a very foolish thing.

'The very plait I did this morning!' exclaimed Jane.

'She has simply cut it straight off!' exclaimed Aunt Florence.

Aunt Isabella had given one look at the severed plait, and then fixed Pamela with an awful gaze. 'Pamela,' she said at last, 'I wish to know what made you cut your hair off.'

'I wanted bobbed hair!' Pamela burst out between her sobs.

'You wanted bobbed hair!' repeated Aunt Isabella, icily.

'Bobbed hair!' echoed Aunt Florence.

'Well I never!' exclaimed Jane.

'You wanted *bobbed hair*, and so, without a word to us, you come up here and cut your plait off!' said Aunt Isabella in a wrathful voice. 'Did you suppose your Aunt Florence and I would allow you to have bobbed hair? Answer me!'

'N-no,' sobbed Pamela.

'No!' said Aunt Isabella. 'You deliberately cut it off knowing how much displeased we should be. You dared to decide such a matter for yourself! A child like you! Now go and look at yourself in the glass!'

Pamela slowly walked to the glass and looked in it as she was told. What a miserable object she saw! This was much worse than the time before. Her face was all red and patchy from crying, and her eyes swollen. But her hair!—it was really dreadful. It hung in straight, uneven ends, much shorter at one side of her head than the other. Pamela gave one look, and then wished she might hide away and never be seen by any one again.

‘You see what you have made of yourself!’ Aunt Isabella’s voice sounded like a judge’s pronouncing sentence on an unusually wicked prisoner. ‘I think that should be punishment enough for you. Now, to teach you a thorough lesson, your hair shall remain like that for a week. After that the hairdresser shall trim it, and it will be left to grow again as soon as possible.’

Pamela sobbed away hopelessly.

‘We can’t take her out with us looking like that,’ said Aunt Florence.

‘Certainly not,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘She must stay up here now till lunch-time. And we must be going and not wasting our time further like this. Now Pamela, stop crying at once. There is nothing to be gained by crying. The thing is done now and cannot be undone.’

‘And it was all your own doing, remember,’ put in Aunt Florence, anxious to point the moral.

‘We are extremely angry with you,’ went on Aunt Isabella; ‘your whole conduct this morning has been disgraceful, and I am quite at a loss to account for it. Now sit down and consider for yourself how exceedingly naughty you have been, and I hope when we return we shall find you genuinely sorry and ready to apologize. Jane, leave Miss Pamela to herself now until lunch-time. And, Jane, you may throw that plait into the dust-bin.’

The Aunts left the room, followed by Jane, carrying Pamela’s pigtail between her thumb and finger.

‘Really, Isabella,’ exclaimed Aunt Florence, as they started down the road, ‘what *can* have come over the child? Who would have believed she would ever do such a thing?’

‘I don’t think she ever will again,’ said Aunt Isabella grimly.

‘She has always been so quiet and docile before,’

said Aunt Florence wonderingly. 'And then to break out like this all of a sudden!'

'Wanting to go to school, and wanting to have bobbed hair, indeed!' exclaimed Aunt Isabella angrily. 'It is all part and parcel of the same thing. The very thought of school has set her trying to ape those mannerless, modern children with their short hair. But I won't have it! I have no patience with people who give in to children's whims and fancies!' And Aunt Isabella positively snorted.

In the meantime Jane had entered the kitchen, holding up the pigtail. 'What do you think of that, Cook?' she demanded.

'What ever is it?' asked Cook, who was as plump and rosy-faced as Jane was lean and sallow.

'Miss Pamela's pigtail. She's gone and cut it off herself!'

'Never!' exclaimed Cook, holding up her hands.

'She said she wanted bobbed hair—told her Aunts so!'

'I wouldn't have thought she'd have the daring!' said Cook amazed. 'And what ever do they say?'

Jane gave as near an account as she could remember of what they said.

'Dear! dear!' said Cook at last. 'Well, it was a naughty thing for her to do, to be sure.'

'Naughty! I should just think it was!' said Jane.

'But she'll be feeling sorry enough by now,' said Cook. 'And I wish the mistresses would let her do more like other children, I do. It's no life at all for a child. There's no denying she's young and they're old, and growing harder as they grow older, poor things. I declare, I often don't know which I pity most, the child or the Aunts!' And the kind-hearted Cook gave a great sigh.

Jane and Cook were good friends, as people opposite in character often are, and they had been many years together at the Laurels. But there were times when Jane considered that Cook was decidedly soft, not to say silly, and this was one of them. 'Pitying the mistresses, indeed!' she thought. 'What should they be pitied for, I should like to know.' And she went out to deposit the pigtail in the dust-bin, while Cook returned to her hash.

But Cook was a wise woman and knew what she was talking about.

And all this time poor, naughty Pamela sat alone in her bedroom and cried and cried as if there were no hope anywhere.

And outside it was such a lovely summer day!

CHAPTER III

CATCHING HAPPINESS

LUNCH was a miserable meal.

Pamela sat at table, silent and in disgrace, trying to swallow hash and rice pudding and tears.

Aunt Isabella at the head of the table and Aunt Florence at the foot talked across to each other occasionally as if Pamela was not there at all. And Jane handed round the vegetables and things with a more than usually stiff and disapproving face.

At last it was over, and Pamela followed the Aunts out of the room, feeling thoroughly frightened and miserable. She wondered what they would say to her when they did speak—or if they were never going to speak to her again. There was no time for more scolding before lunch, for the gong had gone as the Aunts came in at the garden gate, and so they went straight into the dining-room. But now, in the hall, Aunt Isabella turned to her.

‘Now Pamela,’ she said very sternly, ‘are you ready to say you are sorry?’

Pamela stood fumbling with her fingers at the stiff linen of her overall. Of course she was sorry and everything was miserable, but she felt she couldn’t speak.

‘Pamela!’ exclaimed Aunt Florence. ‘Do you hear what Aunt Isabella says to you?’

Pamela stood stock-still, saying nothing.

‘Are you going to answer me, Pamela?’ said Aunt Isabella.

Pamela’s eyes followed the pattern of the ugly brown linoleum on the hall floor, but her mouth remained tightly shut. She felt as if she were living in a horrid

sort of dream and almost as unable to move or speak as one sometimes is in dreams.

‘Very well,’ said Aunt Isabella, ‘if you are going to be sulky I do not wish to have anything more to say to you. Now get your hat and go out into the garden and stay there until we give you permission to come in. But you are not to take a book or a toy with you, remember! You are not staying in the garden this afternoon for enjoyment, but because you are not fit to be seen in the road.’

The Aunts went into the drawing-room, and if they had not been aunts one might have said they slammed the door. Anyway, it was shut extremely firmly.

Pamela went slowly upstairs for her hat, and then crept out by the garden door and down the back garden.

It was a long narrow garden, with long borders filled with sweet old-fashioned flowers, and a beautiful old walnut tree at the far end. Sometimes gardens and houses resemble each other closely, so that you almost know what to expect when you step from one to the other. Now the front garden of the Laurels was just what you would have expected it to be; it simply matched the house and the Aunts, with its stiff laurel bushes, and two little straight flower-beds under the windows, and two little round flower-beds one on each side of the path to the front door. This was because the Aunts overlooked it from their windows, and passed through it every day of their lives, and the neighbours all saw it as they passed down the road; so the old gardener had strict orders how the front garden was to be kept. But to go from the house into the back garden was a complete surprise. It was charming and restful and happy. And this was because the old gardener, who loved flowers, was allowed his own way here almost entirely. And in some instances, when perhaps he had different orders, he went his own



SHE SAW A FAIRY

way all the same. *His* garden, he called this part, and he put his heart into making it lovely, while the front he merely kept clipped and rolled and neat.

Pamela loved this garden, but especially she loved the bit at the end, where flower-beds and paths ended, and four steps in a little bank led down to the grassy space where stood the great walnut tree. But this afternoon she was too full of misery to have eyes for the flowers, or the sunshine, or the butterflies, or the walnut tree. She just made straight for the little grassy bank, threw herself down there, hurled her hat far from her, and cried as if her heart would break.

She lay there crying for a long time, but at last there seemed no more tears left, so she sat up and tried to dry her face with a completely wet handkerchief and her rather grubby knuckles. The result was not very good, so she finished up with the skirt of her overall.

And then a wonderful thing happened.

Perhaps crying had washed her eyes extra clear, though it certainly does not always have that effect, but when a little sound made Pamela turn her head and look up at the flower-bed above her she saw a fairy.

It was a real, unmistakable fairy, with a little green dress and silvery wings, sitting on a comfortable white peony and looking quite at home.

‘Oh-h-h!’ cried Pamela, jumping to her feet and opening her poor aching eyes as wide as they would go.

Pamela stood at the foot of the little grass bank and gazed at the Fairy, and the Fairy sat on the peony in the flower-bed at the top of the bank and gazed back at Pamela.

‘How very untidy you look!’ said the Fairy, not crossly, as the Aunts would have said it, but simply stating the fact.

And Pamela did. Her funny, uneven short hair was

standing up all anyhow about her head, her overall was crumpled and rumpled from lying on the grass bank and being used as a handkerchief, and her face was stained with tears and a little dirt from her fingers mixed. She felt dreadfully ashamed to appear like this before the dainty little Fairy, and hastily tried to smooth her hair with one hand and her overall with the other.

‘Never mind,’ said the Fairy encouragingly. ‘Why were you crying like that?’

‘Because the Aunts are so cross, and I am so unhappy,’ said Pamela, suddenly feeling that to talk to a fairy was the easiest thing in the world.

‘What are aunts?’ asked the Fairy.

‘Aunts,’ said Pamela, hesitating a little, ‘—well, aunts are the sort of people you live with when you haven’t got a real home. They are elderly ladies, you know.’

‘And what makes them cross?’ asked the Fairy.

‘Nearly everything does,’ explained Pamela.

‘Something like witches,’ remarked the Fairy; ‘*they* are nearly always cross.’

‘Oh no!’ said Pamela hastily, ‘I don’t think they are really like witches. Witches are wicked, and the Aunts are good.’

‘I don’t call it good to be cross,’ said the Fairy.

‘But *they* say they are cross because I am naughty.’

‘Are you naughty?’ said the Fairy with interest.

‘I was to-day, dreadfully,’ confessed Pamela.

‘What did you do?’

‘I cut my hair off.’

‘That’s why it looks so funny,’ remarked the Fairy. ‘Why did you cut it off?’

‘All little girls, nearly, have short hair now,’ said Pamela, ‘and I did want mine short too. And—and I was so angry because the Aunts said I was never to go to school and wasn’t to read fairy stories any more. And it was

the naughtiest thing I could think of. Oh-h!—suddenly she clapped her hands together—‘oh, what would Aunt Isabella say! She took my fairy book away from me this morning because she said I was too old for fairies. And now I am talking to a real live one!’

‘No nice people are ever too old for fairies; I’m afraid your Aunts can’t be very nice,’ said the Fairy quite severely.

‘You see, the Aunts don’t *believe* in fairies,’ said Pamela.

‘Ah yes! I know there are plenty of people like that, but not the *best* people,’ said the Fairy airily. ‘We just ignore that sort as a rule.’

‘But *I* can’t ignore them,’ said Pamela; which, of course, was very true.

‘What a pity for you!’ said the Fairy simply. ‘But why won’t they let you go to school? And why do you want to go? And why a lot of other things? Tell me all about *everything*.’

And Pamela, only too thankful to have a friend to confide in, poured out all her story to the Fairy, and told all her dreams of school and games with other children, and all the dullness of real life, and ended up with a full account of this last dreadful morning.

The Fairy listened most attentively, and at the end she nodded her little head several times in a wise manner.

‘I think yours is a very deserving case for a fairy to help,’ she said. ‘You know fairies try to help mortals all they can, and I have just been away from Fairyland for a time on my first piece of work like that. It was amusing a little child who hadn’t any brothers and sisters and whose mother was ill. But now a little baby brother has come to the house, so I’m not needed any more. And there are still three days before I am due to return to Fairyland. Suppose I come and stay with you for those three days?’

‘ Oh, Fairy! do! do! do!’ gasped Pamela, dancing up and down in her excitement.

‘ I might be able to help you,’ went on the Fairy rather pensively, but with a slightly mischievous look in her eyes. ‘ I’m not at all a great and powerful fairy; I can’t wave a wand and grant wishes in the twinkling of an eye. But there are other ways than that of getting things done.’ And the mischievousness spread to the corners of her mouth.

For she was only a young fairy, and she had not outgrown a love of mischief; even if fairies ever do, which is not at all certain.

‘ Oh, how lovely!’ exclaimed Pamela, her eyes shining, and her short hair looking wilder than ever after her dance of joy, ‘ how *lovely* to have a *Fairy to stay*! But—’ she said, suddenly sobering down as the thought struck her, ‘ what will the Aunts say when we go in?’

‘ *They* won’t know,’ said the Fairy.

‘ But—but, won’t they see you?’

‘ Of course not. Grown-ups never see fairies unless on very special occasions. And then the fairies often have the greatest trouble to make them look.’

‘ How funny!’ said Pamela.

‘ Not a bit!’ said the Fairy. ‘ It’s only natural.’

‘ Then Jane won’t see you either? or Cook?’

‘ Are Jane and Cook grown-ups too?’

‘ Oh yes, I should think so!’ said Pamela. ‘ They are as old as old, with grey hair.’

‘ They’ll none of them see me,’ said the Fairy. ‘ Nobody will see me but you. It will be a secret between us.’

‘ Oh, what fun!’ exclaimed Pamela, ‘ what glorious fun!’

‘ But, of course,’ the Fairy went on to explain, ‘ even children don’t see fairies unless the fairies specially wish that they should.’

‘Did you specially wish *I* should? Did you ever come to this garden before, when I didn’t see you?’ asked Pamela all in a breath.

‘*I* never came here before,’ said the Fairy, answering the second question, since she had answered the first before it was asked. ‘But I dare say other fairies have been here from time to time. Wherever there are flowers there may be fairies, you know.’

‘No, I never knew. How lovely!’ said Pamela. ‘Even in the tiniest gardens?’

‘Even in window-boxes,’ said the Fairy. ‘A friend of mine used to spend a great deal of her time on a window-box. But that is a long story.’

‘Oh!’ said Pamela eagerly, ‘can you tell stories?’

‘Lots and lots,’ said the Fairy.

Pamela gave a great sigh of delight. ‘I can hardly believe it’s all true!’ she said. ‘It’s so lovely!’

‘Well, *I’m* true,’ said the Fairy, ‘and I suppose you are, too.’

Pamela laughed. ‘Of course *I’m* true,’ she said.

‘What is your name?’ asked the Fairy.

‘Pamela Perry.’

‘Pamela Perry, what a nice, funny name!’ said the Fairy. ‘No,’ she added, interrupting Pamela, who was just opening her mouth to say something, ‘it’s no use your asking my name, because I mustn’t tell it to you. It has to be kept a secret when I am away from Fairyland. Ask me something else instead.’

Pamela was too polite to say anything more about the Fairy’s name, since it was a secret. So she thought a moment and then asked—‘What made you choose our garden to come to to-day?’

‘Well,’ said the Fairy, ‘I was just flying along, wondering where to go next, and I felt I wanted a rest. Or perhaps something just put it into my head to stop here. Anyway,

I came down on to this nice soft peony. And then I saw you.'

'How *lucky*!' sighed Pamela. 'Oh Fairy, how terribly glad I am you came! I do feel so happy now. And just a little time ago I thought I never *could* be happy again.'

'That *was* a silly thing to think,' said the Fairy. 'When there's such lots and lots of happiness blowing about the world you can't miss catching it before long.'

'Is that what happiness is like?' asked Pamela interestedly. 'I knew people caught colds and measles, but I never knew they caught happiness.'

'Oh yes, it's most catching,' said the Fairy, 'much more catching than colds.'

'When I had a cold in the winter Aunt Florence caught it from me, and she was quite cross with me about it,' said Pamela, rather puzzled. 'But I'm sure when I'm happy the Aunts don't seem to catch happiness from me. I often think it makes them grumpier, and they tell me to get some work to do and not waste time playing.'

'How odd!' said the Fairy. 'There must be something very wrong with them, poor things. I should think they must have got toughness of the heart, or something like that. We must see what can be done about it. Anyway, *we* will catch all the happiness we can, and we will give the Aunts the chance to catch some of it too, if only they will.'

'Oh *yes*!' exclaimed Pamela.

'But of course, if they *won't*—' said the Fairy, with her head on one side. She left the sentence unfinished.

'What shall we do then?' asked Pamela eagerly.

'We shall see what we shall see,' said the Fairy.

'Why that's what my nurse used to say to me,' said Pamela, 'the nurse I had when I was little.'

'She sounds like a wise grown-up,' said the Fairy.

'I did love her,' said Pamela, a little wistfully. 'She

was so kind. She used to play with me a lot. And she told me fairy stories when she was brushing my hair.'

'She must have been a *nice* grown-up,' said the Fairy.

'Oh dear! that reminds me,' went on Pamela, getting rather red. 'My horrible hair! It does look so ugly, doesn't it? And, you know, it is to stay like this for a week!'

'Now *don't* begin to look unhappy again!' said the Fairy. 'We can easily put that right!' She sprang to her feet and stood poised on the peony for a moment. Then she flew to Pamela and perched on her shoulder.

If you have ever had a bird perch on your shoulder you can imagine what it is like to have a fairy; only a fairy is lighter than the smallest bird.

Pamela's hair used to be curly, but it had been rather straightened out and spoilt from living in a tight pigtail so long. But when the Fairy touched it here and there with her tiny fingers it began to curl and wave about her head once more, and the ugly uneven ends hardly showed at all.

'Now shut your eyes,' commanded the Fairy. Pamela shut them tight, and the Fairy very gently touched the heavy swollen eyelids and the cheeks that still showed traces of tears and dirty fingers, and in one moment Pamela looked as fresh and bright as if she had just come out of her morning bath.

'Now your face is nice and clean,' said the Fairy, setting to work to smooth the crumpled overall.

'I never knew what being dry-cleaned was before,' observed Pamela. 'I wish I could always have my face done like that; it feels much nicer than washing. The Aunts send their dresses to be dry-cleaned; I wonder if they are done by fairies. No, I don't think they could be,' she added, thinking of the Aunts' thick, heavy coats and skirts.

When the Fairy gave a final little tug to the overall

and flew back to the peony the better to admire her handiwork, there stood Pamela, with her short curling hair and bright blue eyes and smiling face—the prettiest, jolliest-looking child one could want to see.

‘Oh, thank you, Fairy! I feel much nicer all over!’ exclaimed Pamela delightedly.

‘You *look* much nicer,’ said the Fairy approvingly.

Pamela put her hands up to her head. ‘How funny!’ she said; ‘it used to be like that, all short and curly, when I was quite little. I had almost forgotten. Oh!’—she gave her head a little toss, ‘it does feel so lovely, after all, to have no pigtail dragging my hair back! Oh, I do feel so happy!’ she cried once more, skipping up into the air.

‘We’re catching happiness! We’re catching happiness!’ sang the Fairy, rising like a bird off the peony and half flying, half dancing, from flower to flower.

‘We’re catching happiness! We’re catching happiness!’ sang Pamela, dancing up and down on the grass bank beside her.

Then two loud, shocked voices sounded behind them.

‘Pamela!!’

Pamela turned—and stood suddenly still.

It was the Aunts!

CHAPTER IV

CURLY LOCKS

NO wonder the Aunts were amazed! They had last seen Pamela, a miserable-looking little object, as wretched as they felt she deserved to be. After leaving her severely alone for what they intended should be a long, quiet, solitary afternoon, they had come out prepared to find a really penitent, humbled Pamela. But to find a dancing, singing Pamela simply astounded them.

Luckily they had not heard the Fairy's voice at all.

'What are you doing now, Pamela?' asked Aunt Isabella, at last, in her most frozen voice.

'Capering about like a mad thing!' exclaimed Aunt Florence.

Pamela shot a glance towards the flower-bed. Yes, the Fairy was there, quite close to her, standing swaying on a Canterbury bell. But it was quite evident the Aunts could not see her.

The sight of the Fairy gave Pamela courage to answer, though in rather a small voice, 'I was just dancing a little.'

'Dancing!' said both Aunts together with a kind of snorting noise which quite made the Fairy jump. They stood at the top of the steps and looked at Pamela; at her bright eyes and her cheerful face. Then they looked at each other. Then they looked at Pamela again. Aunt Isabella found her voice first.

'I expected to find you sorry, not *dancing*, you exceedingly naughty girl!' she said.

'And not only dancing, but singing or shouting as well!' exclaimed Aunt Florence in a scandalized tone.

Pamela tried to look ashamed of herself, but not a bit

successfully. It makes all the difference when you are being scolded to have a friendly fairy near you.

‘Isabella!’ gasped Aunt Florence suddenly. ‘Look at her hair!’

Aunt Isabella fixed on her glasses and stared at Pamela. Aunt Florence stared at Pamela. And the Fairy from her Canterbury bell stared with enormous interest at the Aunts, taking them all in, from their hard hats perched high up on their knobbly hair to their thick, black laced shoes.

Then Aunt Isabella spoke. ‘Pamela!’ she said in an awful voice, ‘you have curled your hair!’

‘N-no, Aunt Isabella,’ Pamela stammered, wondering what she should say if she were questioned much further.

‘She couldn’t do it herself. Surely *Jane* could never have done it!’ exclaimed Aunt Florence.

‘Did Jane curl your hair? or Cook?’ asked Aunt Isabella angrily.

‘Oh no, Aunt Isabella,’ answered Pamela promptly.

‘How very peculiar!’ frowned Aunt Isabella.

‘What an extraordinary thing!’ said Aunt Florence.

They were too truthful to say they disliked it, because they could not help seeing that it was most becoming. But they felt it was all wrong that Pamela’s hair, which they had condemned her to wear as it was for a week by way of punishment, should now curl up and look quite pretty. However, since they knew there was no one else who could have done it, for fairies naturally did not enter into their consideration, they luckily questioned Pamela no further.

‘Jane must brush it out thoroughly with a damp brush before tea,’ decided Aunt Isabella.

‘Oh please, Aunt Isabella,’ pleaded Pamela, ‘can’t I keep it like this now? It feels much nicer and tidier.’

‘Pamela! Don’t dare to argue with me on the subject

of your hair! Don't dare to speak of it at all! I am perfectly astonished by your whole behaviour, and perfectly disgusted. Your Aunt Florence and I came out here expecting to find you really repentant and ready to apologize for what you did this morning. And, instead, we find you looking positively—positively happy!' ended up Aunt Isabella indignantly.

Pamela stole a look at the Fairy, who smiled delightedly at her. And, dreadful to say, an answering smile appeared on Pamela's face just for one moment. With a great effort she pulled her mouth back into a serious shape, but the Aunts had seen it.

'She simply doesn't care!' declared Aunt Florence angrily.

'Do you find what I say amusing, Pamela?' asked Aunt Isabella awfully.

'Oh no, Aunt Isabella,' Pamela assured her hastily.

'Then what do you *mean* by smiling when I am speaking to you?'

'I only smiled a little minute at some—,' Pamela was going to say 'somebody' but quickly changed it to 'something.'

'That will do! that is quite enough!' said Aunt Isabella angrily. 'You are a thoroughly naughty, impertinent child. I should not *allow* you to apologize to me in your present mood. Go into the house at once and get ready for tea. I shall speak to Jane myself about your hair.'

The Aunts turned and marched one behind the other, very stiff and straight, along the path between the summer flowers, and Pamela walked behind, half-frightened by the Aunts, half-enchanted by the Fairy who, true to her promise, was coming towards the house with her, flying now on one side, now on the other, and sometimes darting on ahead and almost dancing on the Aunts' hats.

As the Aunts entered the house door the Fairy alighted on Pamela's shoulder.

'So those are Aunts!' she whispered in her ear. 'They *are* funny things!'

Jane was laying the tea, but Aunt Isabella told her to go upstairs at once with Miss Pamela and brush her hair thoroughly with a damp brush. 'I don't know how it has got into such a state,' she said, 'but I wish it brushed properly smooth before tea.'

'Shall I leave my tea things, mum?' asked Jane rather sourly, slapping three plates down upon the table. When Pamela had a pigtail she was supposed to smooth the front of her hair by herself before meals. If short hair meant extra brushing for Jane, then Jane would show her disapproval.

'You can finish laying the tea later. I wish that hair put right immediately,' said Aunt Isabella firmly.

'Very well, mum,' and Jane left the room with a flounce and an injured air. However, she went first to the kitchen and turned out the gas-jet which was heating the kettle, and told Cook that goodness knows when she would be ready to make the tea; so it was several minutes before she started upstairs.

In the meantime Pamela, with the Fairy on her shoulder, had gained her room.

'This is my room, Fairy,' she said breathlessly, shutting the door gently and speaking low. 'Do you think you will like it?'

The Fairy looked round the plain little room, where the only signs that it belonged to a child were the smallness of the bed, a whole menagerie of china animals on the mantelpiece which were presents from the kind nurse, and a little old Teddy Bear lying on a chair by the window who seemed to be turning up his nose at finding himself dressed in a blue voile dress.

‘Yes, I do like it, it’s so neat and tidy,’ approved the Fairy. ‘Of course rooms are never so good as out of doors, but I know humans like to have them,’ she said graciously.

‘And you can see the garden from the window,’ Pamela told her eagerly. ‘It’s *much* nicer than the Aunts’ rooms which look out on to the road.’ She was very anxious to make the best of things so that her guest should not want to leave her.

The Fairy flew to the window-sill and looked out of the wide open window. ‘It’s very pretty here. Yes, I like this place,’ she said. ‘This is where I will sleep to-night.’

‘Oh, I’m so glad!’ exclaimed Pamela. Then she had a sudden inspiration. ‘I know!’ she cried, and darting to the chest of drawers she pulled open a small drawer and produced a piece of pink silk in triumph. ‘It’s a counterpane!’ she said. ‘Nanny made it long ago for my dolls’ bed. I’m afraid it’s rather crumpley because I washed it myself just the other day. Will it do for you to-night?’

‘Beautifully,’ said the Fairy, laying her cheek against it. ‘It’s so lovely and soft and looks like pink roses.’

Pamela beamed with pleasure. She was just going to shut the drawer, but suddenly stopped. ‘Oh!’ she exclaimed, ‘I forgot Teddy!’ She picked him up and introduced him to the Fairy, who politely shook his paw.

‘This dress really belonged to my doll, Amiable Ann (it was Daddy called her that long ago),’ explained Pamela, talking very fast to get things explained before Jane came, ‘but her head got broken, so I put it on Teddy because it is so pretty. But I mustn’t leave him about. I always keep him shut up in a drawer in case the Aunts think I am too old for him, because when they think I am too old for things they send them to a hospital. So I

just pretend he's hiding away from danger, and I only take him out for a little when I'm feeling mis'erable.'

Teddy was carefully laid away at the back of the little top drawer, and then it was shut with a bang as Pamela heard a step on the stairs.

'Ssh!' she said with her finger to her lips. 'Jane!' She ran to the looking-glass and saw her reflection for the first time since the morning. 'Oh-h!' she cried aloud.

'Well, what is it now?' asked Jane grumpily, as she opened the door.

'Oh, Jane! my hair looks so nice like this! I never knew it was so nice. Oh, I do wish you wouldn't brush it all out!'

'Why, what ever's taken it to go like that?' said Jane, quite forgetting her grumpiness in her surprise as she looked at Pamela's curly hair. 'What *have* you been doing to it now?'

'I haven't done anything,' said Pamela. 'But Jane, don't you like it much better? Don't you think it ought to stay like this?'

'It's not what I like, nor what you like neither,' was Jane's response, as she remembered Aunt Isabella's instructions and her own grievance. She seized the hair-brush, dipped it in the water-jug, and brushed vigorously away at the curly head.

The Fairy flew from the window-sill to the dressing-table and watched with interest.

'Ooh!' said Pamela, 'Jane, you hurt me!'

'I've been told to brush your hair smooth, Miss Pamela, and smooth it's going to be,' said Jane. 'Stand still now.' And she brushed and brushed. But when she paused to rest, the hair was curlier than when she started. Then she tried the comb on it, but it flew out and fluffed round the comb in just the same way.

'Drat it!' said Jane.

Aunt Isabella came into the room. 'What are you doing, Jane?' she said indignantly. 'I told you to brush that hair smooth, and it is worse than ever.'

'I can't do nothing with it, mum,' said Jane, indignant too. 'The more I brush, the more it jumps and hops about. I never saw anything like it.'

The Fairy began to laugh gently to herself.

'Nonsense! Give *me* the brush,' demanded Aunt Isabella. 'And pour out some water for me.'

With a thoroughly wet brush Aunt Isabella set to work, and she brushed and brushed and brushed. And she frowned and frowned and frowned.

The more the hair was brushed the more it sprang back in little curls and clusters, and the more Aunt Isabella frowned the more the Fairy rocked backwards and forwards on the dressing-table in silent laughter.

Luckily Pamela was too much occupied in trying to stand steady under this fierce brushing to be tempted to laugh too.

When the wet brush had been plied so thoroughly that Pamela's head looked like a little bush sparkling with dew, Aunt Isabella gave it up. She flung the brush on to the dressing-table, so that the Fairy had to skip nimbly out of its way.

'It is *too* extraordinary!' she said, biting her lip with vexation.

'It's just like magic!' exclaimed Jane.

'Don't talk nonsense, Jane!' snapped Aunt Isabella.

But of course it *was* magic!

And when Aunt Isabella and Jane left the room, the Fairy danced on the dressing-table and sang this little rhyme:

'Curly locks, curly locks, wouldn't go straight:
Brush at them early and brush at them late,
Brush with a wet brush, and brush with a will,
And they shall grow curlier, curlier still!'

CHAPTER V

SOME HONEY AND A WASP

SO Pamela had to go down to tea with her hair curly after all. And Aunt Isabella frowned down Aunt Florence's exclamations.

Tea was in the dining-room. Once more Aunt Isabella sat at the head of the table and Aunt Florence at the foot, and Pamela sat at the side facing the picture of Queen Victoria in her widow's dress; just as they sat for every meal, day after day. But what a different meal this was! For now there was a Fairy sitting in the middle of the table, looking quite at her ease, and Pamela could see her and the Aunts couldn't. How exciting it all was!

The Fairy gazed all round the dining-room with great interest. Evidently she had never seen anything quite like it before. It was not a beautiful room. The wall-paper was a dull brown colour, the pictures were uninteresting; there was a large, ungainly-looking brown sideboard at one end of the room, a book-case filled with gloomy unread-looking books on one side, and a fireplace surrounded by brownish tiles and a large black mantelpiece on the other. The big old-fashioned mahogany table took up most of the floor space. As the windows looked out over the bit of front garden on to the road, they were very much shrouded up with dull-coloured curtains to prevent any one from seeing in.

The Aunts were fond of curtains, and always pulled down blinds to keep any sunshine out. Not that much sunshine ever came in at these windows at the best of times, for the dining-room, drawing-room, and the Aunts' bedrooms above them all looked east, so the sun never shone into them after the early morning. Perhaps this



THERE WAS THE
FAIRY SITTING ON
THE BAR OF THE
BEDSTEAD - - -

helped to make the Aunts' natures rather chilly and east-windy, for they spent a great deal of their time indoors, and even on lovely summer afternoons and evenings would sit in their prim drawing-room, rather than out of doors in the pretty garden.

When she had inspected the room the Fairy turned her attention to the Aunts again. After gazing steadily at Aunt Isabella, she turned round and gazed at Aunt Florence. In fact, the Fairy looked at the Aunts very much as you may see children looking at some large, surprising, and not particularly beautiful animals at the Zoo.

There was honey on the table in a glass saucer. Presently Pamela was delighted to see the Fairy, who had grown tired of looking at the Aunts, dip first one finger in and then another, and then put them in her mouth with obvious enjoyment. She never put the same finger in twice because you see she was a well-brought-up little Fairy.

'How very lucky that there should be honey to-day,' thought Pamela. 'I had never thought about what she would eat!'

'Pass the honey to Aunt Isabella, Pamela, and don't sit staring at it so greedily,' said Aunt Florence.

'Pamela can hardly expect to have honey to-day,' said Aunt Isabella sternly. 'She ought to consider herself very lucky to be allowed butter. In our young days a child who cut off her own hair would have had dry bread and water in her own room.'

'She certainly would,' said Aunt Florence.

Pamela had hastily passed the honey. The table was so much too big for such a small party that she had to stretch so far she nearly fell off her chair every time she passed things to the Aunts.

Aunt Isabella helped herself to honey. So did Aunt Florence. Pamela sat munching thick bread and butter,

looking rather confused because the Aunts had thought she was gazing at the honey out of greed. She tried to keep her eyes from going near it again, and, as always happens when you try not to look at a thing, it seemed to grow and grow and take up much more than its share of the room.

The Fairy looked round with a considering air. Presently she rose on her wings and fluttered about over the table.

‘What are you staring at so vacantly?’ said Aunt Isabella sharply to Pamela, pausing with a large piece of bread, well covered with honey, on the way to her mouth.

Before Pamela could answer, the Fairy flew so close to Aunt Isabella that it seemed she *must* touch her nose, which was rather a long one.

‘OH!’ exclaimed Aunt Isabella. The piece of bread had broken off and fallen, honey side down, into her lap. ‘How disgusting! What horrible stuff honey is! This good skirt!’

The Fairy had hastily swerved and flown back by Aunt Florence.

‘Oh! oh!’ cried Aunt Florence, looking down at her lap, ‘I have done it too!’

‘Really, Florence,’ said Aunt Isabella angrily, ‘because I drop my honey there is no need that you should!’

‘I was just looking to see what had happened to you,’ complained Aunt Florence, ‘and my own piece broke off.’

They both picked off the honeyed bread as well as they could and sat looking pictures of offended disgust, each with sticky fingers and a sticky patch on her dress.

Pamela stole a glance at the Fairy. *Could* it have been her doing?

The Fairy was back on the table, doing a quiet little

dance round the butter-dish. She had an innocent look on her face.

‘We had better sponge it off at once,’ said Aunt Florence.

‘Of course!’ snapped Aunt Isabella. ‘Go on with your tea, Pamela!’ And both Aunts hastily left the room, not in the best of tempers.

‘Fairy,’ said Pamela in a whisper when the door was closed, ‘did you do that?’

The Fairy looked at her for a few moments with her head on one side. Then she smiled as if at some pleasant memory.

‘Pamela,’ she asked, ‘why did she say, “This good skirt!”?’ *I* thought it was a very bad one.’

Pamela gave a sudden chuckle, but hastily put her hand over her mouth in case the Aunts should hear. ‘Then you *did* do it!’ she said.

‘Yes,’ said the Fairy carelessly. ‘When people *won’t* catch happiness, then they will catch something not so nice. They shouldn’t have been so grumpy and greedy.’

Pamela opened her eyes to hear the Aunts called greedy.

‘They took the honey and wouldn’t let you have any.’

‘I don’t think that was exactly greediness, you know,’ said Pamela, trying to be fair. ‘That was punishing me.’

‘How long do they go on punishing?’ asked the Fairy. ‘I thought not having your hair cut properly for a week was their way of punishing.’

‘It *was* going to be,’ said Pamela, ‘but you see you have made it so nice now that it isn’t punishment at all.’

‘Well, anyway they made you cry for a long time because they were so cross with you. I should have thought that would do,’ remarked the Fairy. ‘When will you be punished enough?’

‘I don’t quite know,’ said Pamela doubtfully. ‘You see they are angry again because I am so happy.’

‘Don’t they want you to be happy?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Pamela again. ‘No, I don’t think they do. Not when I’ve been naughty.’

‘But you *were* unhappy, very unhappy indeed,’ persisted the Fairy. ‘You can’t go on being unhappy for ever just to please those Aunts. It’s simple nonsense, you know!’ The Fairy spoke most decidedly for such a tiny person. Then she looked all round. ‘I don’t care very much for this ugly room,’ she observed. ‘Why do you eat your food in here when there is so much lovely out-of-doors where you could have it sitting on the grass?’

‘That would be lovely,’ said Pamela, ‘but I *know* the Aunts wouldn’t like it. They never sit on the grass. They say it’s damp.’

‘They are quite the funniest people I have ever met,’ said the Fairy. ‘But come out now,’ she added. ‘This is the loveliest time of day in a garden. Come out and forget about the Aunts!’

The Fairy suddenly darted out through the open window into the sunshine. Pamela followed the same way, though a good deal more clumsily, and tip-toed round to the back garden as quietly as she could.

‘What would the Aunts say?’ she thought with a thrill, for this was the first time she had ever got out through a window!

When, a few moments later, the Aunts opened the dining-room door, they stared to see the room was empty.

‘Did you hear Pamela go out?’ Aunt Isabella asked.

‘No,’ said Aunt Florence, ‘certainly not. I should have told her to wait for us.’

‘She certainly has no business to leave the room before we have finished our tea,’ said Aunt Isabella severely. ‘Where can she be?’

‘We had better just finish tea now, and find her afterwards,’ said Aunt Florence rather fretfully. She liked

her tea and resented all these interruptions to it to-day. She poured herself out a fresh cup and sat down again.

But Aunt Isabella was made of sterner stuff. She went to the foot of the stairs. 'Pamela!' she called. 'Pamela!'

But no Pamela answered.

Aunt Isabella rushed out into the garden. 'Pamela!' she called. 'Pamela!' her voice sounding louder and louder.

Pamela from the end of the garden heard it at once.

'Oh, dear!' she exclaimed, 'it's Aunt Isabella, and she will make me go in!'

'Why? It isn't naughty to be out here, is it?' asked the Fairy.

'No, but I know she will,' sighed Pamela. 'They always stop nice things. And it's so *lovely* out here this evening.'

'Let's play hide and seek,' said the Fairy promptly. 'We'll hide and *she'll* seek!' She flew up among the branches of the walnut tree, beckoning Pamela to follow.

The tree had branches at easy intervals and coming quite near to the ground. It was a tree made to be climbed, and in an instant Pamela was up, scrambling from branch to branch, out of breath, out of Aunt Isabella's sight, and terribly excited.

She had never climbed a tree before! What a glorious adventure it was! She really forgot in her excitement that climbing trees was not allowed.

Sitting on a branch quite high up, clasping the trunk with both arms, Pamela peered down through the leaves with trembling joy while Aunt Isabella passed along the path near by, looking and calling, and sounding angrier and angrier.

'How *terribly* angry she will be!' she whispered to the Fairy, who had settled for a moment on a level with her face, two branches higher.

'She can't get *much* angrier or she would burst,' said

the Fairy, pensively swinging from leaf to leaf. 'Isn't this a lovely green world up here?'

'Oh, lovely!' sighed Pamela blissfully.

The Fairy peeped out at Aunt Isabella again. 'Does her hair grow like that?' she asked.

'Like what?' said Pamela.

'In those lumps and bumps,' said the Fairy.

'Oh no!' said Pamela. 'That's the way she does it.'

'How stupid of her!' said the Fairy sweetly.

They watched Aunt Isabella, after a hasty search round the garden, hurry back into the house.

'I hope she doesn't come out again, the garden is so much nicer without her,' the Fairy remarked frankly.

'They'll be looking for me indoors now,' said Pamela cheerfully.

And while the house was being searched from floor to floor and from room to room for Pamela, Pamela and the Fairy were sitting peacefully up among green leaves, singing little nonsense songs for sheer happiness. How Pamela knew the words I don't know, but she found herself singing them with the Fairy quite as a matter of course.

This was one of the songs:

'Oh, I do like bees,
And flowers and trees,
And a dear little breeze,
And butterflies a-fluttering in twos and threes!

Oh, I like to spy
The birds that fly,
And the big blue sky,
And I love sitting swaying on a bough so high.

But I don't like Aunts
With their don'ts and their can'ts,
And their bothersome shan'ts,
Oh, they're not the sort of people that a garden wants!'

But presently a search-party, consisting of Aunt Isabella, Aunt Florence, Jane, and Cook, burst out of the house, and the calling began again in different tones and keys.

‘Pamela! Pamela!’ very stern and fierce from Aunt Isabella.

‘Pamela! Pamela!’ higher and more agitated from Aunt Florence.

‘Miss Pamela! Miss Pamela!’ indignantly from Jane.

‘Miss Pamela! Miss Pamela!’ more coaxingly from Cook.

Pamela suddenly woke out of her dreamy mood of happiness.

‘Oh, Fairy, I must get down now!’ she said. ‘Oh, dear, what *will* they say!’

‘I suppose you must,’ said the Fairy. ‘They *are* making such a noise, aren’t they? Who is that new Person?’

‘That’s Cook,’ said Pamela, as she began the descent of the tree, feeling more and more frightened the nearer she got to the ground. A few moments later she arrived with a jump in full view of the four searchers who had just come to the end of the path.

They all exclaimed loudly at the same moment, ‘There she is!’

‘She was up the walnut tree!’ cried Aunt Florence in horror.

‘The idea!’ snorted Jane.

‘Well I never!’ said Cook, secretly feeling some sympathy for Pamela. Cook had climbed trees herself when she was young.

They came on down the steps, Aunt Isabella first with a grim, set face.

Pamela hastily looked round about for the Fairy to help her, though what the Fairy could do she did not

quite know. But the Fairy was nowhere to be seen. Surely she could not be going to desert her just at this moment!

'You wicked child! Hiding from us! Climbing a tree!' exclaimed Aunt Isabella, and, angrier than she had ever been with her before, she seized Pamela and shook her.

But it was only for a moment. There was a cry, not from Pamela, who was too dazed to make a sound, but from Aunt Isabella herself. She stepped back hastily, with one hand to her cheek and the other hitting out in the air.

'Isabella! what is it? what is the matter?' asked Aunt Florence anxiously.

And Jane and Cook crowded round Aunt Isabella too. Pamela was forgotten, and she stood looking rather bewildered.

'Don't be frightened,' whispered a little voice in her ear, and there was the Fairy on her shoulder again.

'A horrible wasp has stung me!' exclaimed Aunt Isabella. 'Look! There it goes! Brute!' And the wasp with a great buzzing flew away out of reach of Jane's dish-cloth which she flapped after it.

'Is the sting left in? Let me look,' said Aunt Florence. 'No, I think it's all right,' she added.

'It's *not* all right! It's extremely painful!' said Aunt Isabella angrily.

'Blue-bag is the thing for it, mum; that will take the pain out,' said Cook.

'Yes, come into the house and we will put some on,' said Aunt Florence soothingly.

The injured Aunt Isabella was led away between Aunt Florence and Cook, while Jane was told off to see that Pamela went to bed immediately, and without supper.

'We don't wish to see her again to-night,' said Aunt

Florence severely. And Aunt Isabella said the same, more bitterly.

No talking was possible while Jane was in the room, and, though it was so early, by the time Pamela was in her bed and the Fairy curled up in the pink silk counterpane on the window-sill, both were strangely sleepy. It had been an eventful day.

‘Good-night, Fairy,’ said Pamela drowsily. ‘It’s lovely-having-you.’

‘Good-night, Pamela,’ murmured the Fairy; and added, still more drowsily, ‘I-told-the-wasp-to.’

CHAPTER VI

GOOD RESOLUTIONS

PAMELA woke up next morning wondering why she felt so different and so happy. She moved her head on the pillow. Why, where was her pigtail? She put up a hand. Curls! The Fairy! In a flash it all came back. A Fairy had come to stay with her!

She sat up in bed and looked towards the window-sill to make sure it wasn't a dream. But there was no Fairy there now, and no pink silk counterpane. Pamela rubbed her eyes and looked again. It *couldn't* have been a dream, because there was her curly hair. She looked round the room, but could see no sign of her Fairy. She began to feel anxious.

'Fairy!' she called in a soft, imploring voice, 'Fairy, where are you?'

She was answered by a little laugh from somewhere above her head. She looked up, and there was the Fairy sitting on the topmost bar of the bedstead.

'Oh, Fairy!' exclaimed Pamela in great relief, 'I couldn't think what had become of you! I thought you had flown away!'

'I was just teasing you for a little minute,' said the Fairy, fluttering down on to the bedclothes. 'What a sleepy-head you are! I have been up ever so long, and made my bed too!' and she pointed to the pink silk counterpane neatly folded up on a chair.

'Oh, *why* didn't you wake me?' said Pamela reproachfully.

'It's best to wake in your own good time,' said the Fairy. 'Mortals need more sleep than Fairies. I knew you wouldn't wake for a long time, so I flew out into the

garden for a little honey and dew and a chat with the bees.'

'How lovely!' said Pamela. 'I wish I could get my breakfast as easily as that. I'm *hungry*! Why, of course, I didn't have any supper last night!' Her mind went back over the events of yesterday. 'Oh, I do wonder what is going to happen to-day! Will the Aunts still be very angry, do you think?'

'Surely they can't *still* be angry when there has been a lovely quiet night in between!' said the Fairy. But Pamela did not feel quite so certain.

'I think perhaps I ought to try to be good to-day,' she said thoughtfully.

'Oh yes, let's be good!' said the Fairy cheerfully. 'What shall we do? We might try being kind to the Aunts.'

'Do you think they would like that?' asked Pamela rather doubtfully.

'Of course!' said the Fairy. 'Perhaps a little kindness is just what they need to soften the toughness of the heart, you know.'

'Do you think they have really got toughness of the heart?' asked Pamela.

'Yes, I'm positive,' said the Fairy.

'Poor Aunts!' said Pamela. 'I never knew anything was the matter with them before. I *will* try being kind. Only what shall we do?'

The Fairy thought for a few moments. Then her attention was distracted by a sound coming up from the garden, a strange, growling, husky sound.

'What can that dreadful noise be?' she said, looking quite alarmed. 'It sounds like an Ogre!'

'It's only the old gardener singing,' explained Pamela. 'This is the morning he comes to work in the garden. Tuesday mornings and all Saturdays he comes.'

‘Oh,’ said the Fairy, relieved, ‘I’m glad to know it’s only singing, but I should never have guessed.’ She flew over to the window and peeped out. ‘I can see him. What a funny old man!’

Pamela jumped out of bed and ran to the window too. The old gardener was just wheeling his wheelbarrow off towards the vegetable patch that ran along under the right-hand wall of the garden. ‘Isn’t he old?’ said Pamela. ‘I should think he must be about a hundred—or two!’

‘Yes, I should think he was,’ said the Fairy. ‘Is he nice?’

Pamela considered. ‘I think he is nice *inside*,’ she said, ‘but he pretends to be rather cross outside. He doesn’t like people talking to him much; he only likes flowers.’

‘Does he take care of the flowers in this garden?’ asked the Fairy.

Pamela nodded. ‘Yes, he does it all. Cook says he does a power of work for his age.’

‘He *must* be nice inside then, for this is a lovely garden,’ said the Fairy. Then she clapped her hands suddenly. ‘I know!’ she cried, ‘suppose you pick the Aunts a bunch of flowers each, to give them when they come downstairs!’

‘Oh yes!’ said Pamela, quite carried away by the idea. ‘And put them on the breakfast table by their places! That would be a nice surprise for them!’

At that moment she heard Jane’s step, and only just had time to skip back into bed before the door opened.

Jane looked round suspiciously. ‘Why, I thought one of your Aunts must be in the room!’ she said. ‘Whatever are you doing now, talking to yourself like that?’

‘I—I—well, I was just making a plan,’ explained Pamela as well as she could. It really was rather confusing at times to have a guest no one else could see.

‘Well, I’m sure I hope it’s a better plan than any you made yesterday,’ said Jane crushingly. ‘And I hope you’re feeling ashamed of your goings-on, though I can’t say you look it. Anyway, there’s no call to go talking aloud to an empty room. Any one might think you were wanting.’

‘Wanting what?’ asked Pamela, puzzled.

‘Wanting sense,’ said Jane severely. ‘Now I can’t stand talking here all morning, and your bath water’s running, so look sharp, please.’ She left the room.

Pamela jumped up. ‘I must be quick or she will be cross too,’ she whispered to the Fairy.

‘Dear me!’ said the Fairy, ‘can she be crosser than that?’

‘Oh much!’ said Pamela, struggling into her dressing-gown.

‘What a funny lot of cross people live in this house!’ observed the Fairy. ‘I think I’ll go back to the garden now and wait for you there. I think I might want to pinch Jane if I saw much of her; it will be easier to feel good in the garden.’

‘I’ll come just as quick as I can,’ promised Pamela.

With a wave of her hand the Fairy flew off out of the window and dived down among the flowers, where she was hidden in a moment.

‘I wish I could fly straight out all ready like that,’ thought Pamela enviously. ‘What a bother baths and dressing are!’ But just then she heard Jane call; and, seizing her towel and sponge, she ran off to her bath, determined to be as quick as she possibly could.

When she was ready she crept downstairs very silently, for fear the Aunts might call out to know what she was about. Cook had left the side door standing open to the fresh morning air, so there was no noise of turning a key or a handle, and in a moment Pamela was safely outside.

It was a wonderful, blue, sunny morning, and the garden looked its freshest and brightest. Pamela went skipping gaily down the path, and the Fairy came flying to meet her.

‘Come along,’ she said, ‘I’ve been choosing flowers for you.’

‘I had better run and ask the gardener first,’ said Pamela, ‘else he might be angry.’

She ran round the bottom path and turned up by the vegetables, where she found the old man digging away.

‘Good morning, Mr. Dunton,’ she said politely.

The old gardener stopped work, straightened himself stiffly, and turned towards her.

‘Good morning, Missy,’ he said, looking at her rather suspiciously, because that was the way he looked at any one who came into *his* garden.

‘May I pick some flowers, please?’ asked Pamela rather timidly.

‘What flowers ’ud ye be wanting?’ he asked gruffly.

‘Some from the beds by the grass bank, please,’ said Pamela, as they were the farthest from the house. ‘I want them to give to my Aunts,’ she explained. ‘I’ll pick very carefully.’

The old gardener looked at her for a moment. Perhaps he noticed her changed appearance. Perhaps Cook had told him all about yesterday, for she was rather a friend of his. But he was a man of few words, except when he was singing.

‘You can have ’em,’ he said, and returned to his digging.

‘Oh, thank you!’ said Pamela gratefully, and sped away down the path again.

‘Flowers are too good for they,’ muttered the old gardener to himself. But he wasn’t including Pamela in that thought.

Pamela picked while the Fairy gave directions, and soon two beautiful bunches of summer flowers were ready. Pamela ran backwards down the bank and laid the second bunch on the grass beside the first and looked at them admiringly.

‘But they ought to be tied up,’ she said.

‘Yes, with ribbon,’ said the Fairy.

‘I know! hair-ribbons!’ said Pamela. ‘My Sunday ones, because I don’t need them any more! I’ll fetch them!’

She raced down the path, and, after listening a moment at the door, ventured up for the ribbons and down again without meeting a single Aunt.

A few minutes later both bunches were tied up with pale blue ribbon, and Pamela hastened back to the house with them and laid them on the breakfast table, one at the head, the other at the foot.

‘*Don’t* they look pretty!’ she said admiringly.

‘The Aunts *will* be pleased,’ said the Fairy.

Next moment the Aunts were heard on the stairs. The Fairy took up her position on the table to have a good view of the Aunts’ pleasure. Pamela stood feeling a little uncertain whether she was still too much in disgrace for the good-morning kiss.

The Aunts entered the room, and, with grim, unfor-giving faces, each offered Pamela a hard cheek as usual. And while Aunt Florence’s was being kissed, Aunt Isa-bella saw the flowers.

‘What are these flowers doing on the breakfast table?’ she asked, and it was quite clear from her tone that she wasn’t pleased yet.

There was a little pause. Pamela felt things were not going quite right.

‘Well, Pamela,’ said Aunt Florence sharply, ‘do you know anything about it?’

‘I picked them,’ Pamela blurted out, ‘for you both.’

‘And why?’ said Aunt Isabella sternly. ‘Why did you pick the garden flowers without leave?’

‘I—I thought you would like them,’ faltered Pamela. ‘I did ask Mr. Dunton, and he said I might.’

The Fairy looked at the Aunts with growing disapproval. This wasn’t the way presents were received in Fairyland.

‘I do not like disobedience,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘You know you are not allowed to pick the flowers without permission from Aunt Florence or myself. Dunton is not the person for you to ask, as you know very well.’

‘I thought for you it would be different,’ murmured Pamela.

‘If you really want to please us, Pamela, you will do it best by doing exactly what you are told and giving no further trouble,’ said Aunt Isabella.

Unfortunately at this moment Aunt Florence gave a sudden exclamation and picked up her bunch. ‘Look what she has done! Used her best hair-ribbons to tie them up with!’

‘I thought I shouldn’t need them again,’ said Pamela, hastily trying to avert Aunt Isabella’s wrath, but unluckily she had said the very worst thing.

‘Is this simply meant as a further piece of naughtiness and impertinence, Pamela?’ demanded Aunt Isabella, seizing the poor pretty flowers and holding them out towards her niece as if they were obnoxious weeds.

Pamela looked at the flowers, and then at the floor. She did not know what to say next. The Aunts *never* understood what she meant, never! Perhaps she might have begun to cry, but at that instant the Fairy suddenly alighted on her shoulder and gently patted her cheek to show her sympathy. Pamela did not dare to make a sign, but she lifted up her head again and felt cheered.

'Is this', went on Aunt Isabella, pointing to the blue ribbon, 'a sign that you are glorying in having cut your hair off, instead of being ashamed?'

'No, no,' said Pamela earnestly, 'it really wasn't—I never thought—it was only to make the bunches look prettier.'

'I hope you are speaking the truth,' said Aunt Isabella in a very doubting kind of tone. 'In any case, it was extremely wrong of you to use your hair-ribbons for such a purpose, and you must have been perfectly aware of that.'

'And as to not needing them again, you will certainly need them as soon as your hair has grown long enough to be plaited properly once more,' put in Aunt Florence.

'Take both bunches away,' commanded Aunt Isabella, 'and ask Jane to put the flowers in water, and wash and iron the ribbons; and you must apologize to her for giving her this extra work. Then come back and eat your breakfast, and let us have no more trouble with you to-day. Do you understand?'

'Yes, Aunt Isabella,' said Pamela in a small voice, and she took the flowers that she had picked with such good intentions and went off to find Jane.

'Never mind!' whispered the Fairy consolingly, when the dining-room door was shut. 'They *are* like witches! They are ugly and cross and they try to make other people unhappy. That's witches all over!'

Perhaps it isn't really very comforting to hear that your aunts are like witches, but the Fairy meant it for the best, and Pamela felt grateful for her encouragement.

'But what will Jane say?' she sighed, as she paused outside the pantry door.

'If she says too much I shall pinch her, even though I *am* being good!' said the Fairy.

In the meantime the Aunts were settling down to

poached eggs grown tepid, while they agreed once more that Pamela was behaving in a most mysterious and unusual manner, and that it would have to stop.

‘If she doesn’t seem more like herself by the evening I shall give her a dose,’ said Aunt Florence, who was the one who kept the medicine cupboard. ‘I think she *must* be out of sorts to break out all of a sudden in such an extraordinary fashion.’

‘It has certainly got to be cured somehow,’ said Aunt Isabella firmly. ‘We cannot have the whole house upset by a child in this way. Personally, I think we have not been strict enough with her lately, and so she has taken advantage. She had better have half-an-hour’s extra lessons this morning to show her that she is not to be allowed to behave just as she pleases.’

‘But that will make us late in getting out,’ objected Aunt Florence.

‘Discipline must be maintained,’ said Aunt Isabella shortly, for Pamela’s step could be heard in the hall.

Pamela came back into the room after her interview with an indignant Jane (who had only *just* escaped pinching), and the Fairy came back too, though the Aunts did not know *that*.

‘Did you apologize to Jane?’ demanded Aunt Isabella.

‘Yes, Aunt Isabella.’

‘Very well. Now sit down at once and eat your bread and milk.’ And the Aunts showed their disapproval by taking no further notice of Pamela during breakfast time.

But the Fairy sat up on the top of the cruet-stand and took a great deal of notice of the Aunts, and thought of some quite amusing things she could do if only she had not agreed with Pamela about being good.

CHAPTER VII

DISCIPLINE FOR AUNTS

AFTER breakfast Pamela and the Fairy held a consultation in the schoolroom, where Pamela had been sent to put her books out for the day's lessons.

'Shall we go on being kind to the Aunts?' inquired the Fairy.

'I don't believe they *like* kindness,' said Pamela rather sorely. Nobody likes being blamed for what was intended as a good action.

'Of course it only shows what a lot of softening they need,' said the Fairy. 'But they must like kindness really, you know, only they don't seem to like the same sort that fairies would. What kind of things do they really enjoy?'

Pamela thought for a little. 'I don't think they exactly *enjoy* anything,' she said at last.

'Not anything at all!' exclaimed the Fairy. 'Don't they enjoy gardens, and fields, and moonlight, and sunshine, and great, enormous trees?'

'They don't seem to much,' said Pamela.

'Well, what sort of things do they *do*? ' persisted the Fairy.

'Well,' said Pamela thoughtfully, 'they go to the shops in the morning, the butcher's and grocer's and things. And in the afternoons, well, sometimes they don't go out, and sometimes they go to tea with other ladies.'

'In houses?' asked the Fairy.

'Oh yes,' said Pamela, 'always in houses.'

'Anything else?' said the Fairy.

'Oh yes, they go to sewing-parties and parish meetings.'

‘Dear me!’ said the Fairy, ‘are those fun? Somehow they don’t sound as if they were.’

‘Oh no,’ said Pamela. ‘The Aunts don’t like fun.’

‘It doesn’t seem easy to be kind to people like that,’ observed the Fairy rather sadly. ‘The best plan will be for me to watch and listen carefully and try to find out what they really do like. Because everybody must like something.’

‘I suppose so,’ said Pamela, wrinkling up her forehead in her efforts to think. ‘It does seem stupid I don’t know what the Aunts like. I know such lots and lots of things they don’t like. They tell me about the ones they *don’t*, you see, but not about the ones they *do*.’

‘I expect they like quite different things from us,’ said the Fairy, ‘but if we can only find out *what*, why then we’ll try being kind again and give it them, and then they *must* be pleased.’

‘Of course,’ said Pamela, suddenly remembering, ‘Aunt Isabella did say this morning that if I wanted to please them I should do just what I was told and give no further trouble.’

‘But I should only call that not *displeasing*,’ said the Fairy. ‘It’s not what *I* mean by pleasing, not a bit.’

‘No, it’s not a very int’esting way,’ agreed Pamela. ‘But p’raps I’d better try it first, just till you think of something better.’

Aunt Isabella’s step was heard in the hall, and she came in to find an industrious-looking Pamela hastily opening a history book.

‘There will be half-an-hour’s extra lessons to-day,’ said Aunt Isabella, as she sat down and placed a little pile of unattractive-looking books on the table in front of her. ‘I don’t think I need explain to you, Pamela, why that should be?’

She waited for a reply to this, so Pamela meekly said, 'No, Aunt Isabella.'

'We will begin with Grammar,' said Aunt Isabella.

Pamela sighed inwardly. Grammar was the worst of all!

But somehow this morning she found herself doing much better than usual. She answered Aunt Isabella's questions about conjunctions and prepositions and difficult things like that quite correctly. And her parsing almost did itself. And the same thing happened all through lesson time. Although the Aunts were both extra strict and particular, Pamela had never done her work so well and so easily.

Perhaps, even at lessons, it is a good thing to have a Fairy beside you on the table, especially if you have both been making good resolutions beforehand.

At the end of the morning, when the Aunts considered the copy-book, the sums, the dictation, and the parsing, they really felt some approval, though all they said to Pamela was that they were glad she had done better than yesterday.

But then came something that made Pamela and the Fairy prick up their ears.

'There is nothing like discipline,' said Aunt Isabella to Aunt Florence, and she said it in a pleased sort of tone. 'It is the truest kindness.'

'Of course it is,' agreed Aunt Florence earnestly.

Pamela did not often ask Aunt Isabella questions, but she felt this was too important to be passed over. 'What is discipline, Aunt Isabella?' she said eagerly, while the Fairy drew a little nearer to listen to the answer.

'Discipline, Pamela, is training people to do right by severity and punishment if they will not do it of their own accord,' said Aunt Isabella.

'Oh!' said Pamela rather blankly, not thinking this

sounded very attractive. And then, as Aunt Isabella left the room, she asked: 'Do *you* like discipline, Aunt Florence?'

'No one can be happy without discipline, Pamela,' said Aunt Florence, with a smug expression on her face.

The Fairy and Pamela exchanged meaning glances.

'Now we know what we have to do!' exclaimed the Fairy cheerfully, when she and Pamela had gained the bedroom once more. 'We must give the Aunts discipline because that is the sort of kindness they really like.'

'How shall we do it?' asked Pamela.

'Well, we must think about that,' said the Fairy.

'“Discipline, Pamela, is training people to do right by severity and punishment if they will not do it of their own accord,”' she quoted thoughtfully.

'It sounds horrid,' said Pamela.

'But the Aunts don't think so. Look how pleased they seemed about the idea of it!' said the Fairy. 'They said no one could be happy without it.'

'Yes, they did say so,' owned Pamela.

'What exactly *is* severity?' inquired the Fairy.

'Oh, it's being very stern and severe, just like the Aunts,' explained Pamela.

'I see,' said the Fairy. 'We have punishments in Fairyland, but we haven't got anything like the Aunts there. But it won't be any use my making a face like an Aunt,' she added sadly, 'because they can't see me.'

The idea of the Fairy trying to look like Aunt Isabella was too much for Pamela, and she laughed out loud.

'Hush!' said the Fairy reprovingly, 'we don't want them to come in here. This is an important matter for us to think about. The Aunts must be trained to be kind and nice, and to like nice things instead of always disapproving. And we must be very strict, and every

time they *won't* like nice things, and every time they are cross, they must be punished.'

Pamela opened her eyes wide at this daring idea.

'How do you punish Aunts?' she asked.

'That depends on what they do,' said the Fairy. 'You know I really began giving the Aunts discipline yesterday afternoon, though I didn't know what it was called then!'

'You won't hurt them?' said Pamela rather nervously, remembering the wasp. She was too kind-hearted to want even the severest aunt stung at intervals by various insects.

'Oh no!' said the Fairy. 'It only had to be the wasp last night to stop Aunt Isabella from hurting you. I won't do it again.'

'Pamela! Pamela!' called Aunt Florence impatiently from the stairs.

'Oh dear!' exclaimed Pamela. 'They're ready to go to the shops, and I'm not! Just coming, Aunt Florence!' she called back. She dragged off her holland overall, rushed to the cupboard for her hat and flung it on her head, and seized her gloves from the dressing-table drawer, nearly pulling the drawer right out in her hurry. The Aunts insisted upon gloves.

'Wait a moment,' said the Fairy. She flew to Pamela, gave her hat a little pull, and her hair a little pat at each side, and somehow just the touch of her fingers made a wonderful difference. 'Now,' she said with a satisfied little smile, 'you look very nice indeed, and we will see if the Aunts can be pleased by that!'

Pamela went down the stairs, the Fairy sitting on her shoulder and holding on by the collar of her blue linen dress.

The Aunts looked at Pamela so queerly for a moment that her heart gave a great thump because she thought

they must be seeing the Fairy. But all Aunt Isabella said was: 'Come quickly, Pamela; you know we are late this morning,' in a rather scolding voice.

So they set off down the road, Aunt Isabella, Aunt Florence, Pamela, and the Fairy.

As they passed White House School Pamela turned her head and gave a little nod, and the Fairy gave a little nod, too, to show she understood. The big bow-windows on the ground floor were wide open, and inside they could see some of the little girls with bobbed hair whom Pamela had envied for so long.

'I still want to go to school dreadfully,' thought Pamela, 'but I've got bobbed hair now, just for a little time anyway, and I don't suppose any of those other girls ever had a fairy to stay with them!' And she did wish they could all turn their heads and see her walking down the road with a fairy on her shoulder.

'Pamela! don't stare in at the windows of that school!' said Aunt Isabella sharply, 'it's an exceedingly rude habit.'

Just then they met an acquaintance, who stopped to tell the Aunts that the Friday sewing-party would be held at Mrs. Robinson's house instead of the Rectory, as Mrs. Forrest (the Rector's wife) was to have three teeth out on that afternoon. Then this Mrs. Ellis, who was a kind, motherly woman, turned to speak to Pamela. She gave quite a start of surprise when she saw her.

'Why,' she said, 'you have had your hair bobbed, Pamela! How very nice it looks! Doesn't it feel nice and comfortable, too?'

'Yes, thank you,' answered Pamela shyly, growing rather red, partly from pleasure at hearing her hair admired, and partly from consciousness of the Aunts' disapproval.

The Fairy beamed at this discerning lady who was so much more amiable than the Aunts.

But Aunt Isabella's cold voice dispelled everybody's pleasure. 'I am very sorry to have to tell you how exceedingly naughty Pamela has been,' she said. 'She cut off her hair herself yesterday. Neither my sister nor myself approve of bobbed hair.'

'Oh dear!' said poor Mrs. Ellis, feeling she had very much been saying the wrong thing, and not knowing quite what to say next.

'It is not to remain short,' put in Aunt Florence.

'Oh no,' said Mrs. Ellis hastily. 'Now I must run, as my cook will be waiting for these sultanas! *Good-bye!* Good-bye!' and she hurried away from the Aunts' disapproving gaze.

They walked on. The Aunts kept a grim silence. The Fairy hummed a gay little tune that only Pamela could hear, and Pamela's spirits, which had been cast down for a moment, soon revived. After all, what do Aunts matter compared with a Fairy?

They turned down Robins' Road and soon reached the High Street, where all the chief shops were, the old-established, very respectable shops with which the Aunts dealt. The Misses Perry, since they had lived in Merlinton all their lives, were very well known to the shopkeepers, and much respected, even though they were not exactly loved. So when they entered the first shop, which was the baker's, the baker's wife greeted them smilingly and said what a lovely day it was and real summer at last. Then she held up her hands at the sight of Pamela.

'Why!' she exclaimed, 'little Missy has had her hair bobbed, I do declare! And doesn't she suit it!'

Pamela gave her a little embarrassed smile while she waited uneasily for the explanation from Aunt Isabella. However, the Aunts had too much pride to talk of Pamela's misdeeds to the tradespeople.

‘We do not care for it now it is done, Mrs. White, and the hair is to be left to grow again as soon as possible,’ said Aunt Isabella very stiffly. ‘We want a shilling Madeira cake, please.’ And Mrs. White, like Mrs. Ellis, was made to realize she had not said the right thing.

‘Poor lamb!’ she said to herself as she watched Pamela follow her Aunts out of the shop, ‘I expect she does have a time with those strict, starchy Aunts of hers!’

Pamela turned for one second on the threshold to give kind Mrs. White a farewell smile, and the good woman smiled and nodded encouragingly. ‘Why, she looks as pretty as a picture now! What a shame that they want to scrape her hair back again into an ugly plait!’

The Aunts’ faces were very grim indeed now. Their next stop was the grocer’s, and Mr. Tomkins, the grocer, was a particularly friendly and talkative little man.

‘You can wait outside, Pamela,’ said Aunt Isabella. Perhaps she wished to avoid any more remarks on Pamela’s appearance.

The Fairy had a mischievous little smile on her face. ‘I think if lots of people say they like your hair,’ she whispered in Pamela’s ear, ‘that will be a little bit training the Aunts to like nice things!’

The Aunts reappeared, and they walked on down the High Street. Now all Merlinton came along the High Street every morning to do their shopping. Some carried baskets, and some carried bags, and some, like the Aunts, carried nothing and just ordered the shopkeepers in a superior way to send everything up to their houses. And the friendly ones stopped for a few words, and the unfriendly ones, like the Aunts, passed by with stiff little nods and ‘good mornings’. But this morning, though it was past the time for the usual rush of household shopping, all the Aunts’ acquaintances still seemed to be walking in the High Street, and—was it the influence

of the lovely summer's day? or was it anything to do with the Fairy?—one after another they all stopped to speak to the Aunts, and then they all exclaimed that Pamela had had her hair bobbed, and how nice it looked! From the time they left the grocer's until they finally fled from the High Street the Aunts had no peace from compliments on Pamela's improved appearance. In shops and out it was the same story. They certainly did not encourage all this neighbourliness. Their faces grew longer and grimmer, and their answers shorter and crosser. And when the High Street was left behind and they were going up Robins' Road once more, Aunt Isabella could contain her temper no longer.

'Now, Pamela,' she exclaimed angrily, 'I only hope you feel half as ashamed of yourself as I do of you! You have made yourself absolutely conspicuous with that short hair. Remember, it is not a thing to be proud of at all, it is simply a sign of vulgarity to be conspicuous in the street!'

As Aunt Isabella spoke, Pamela felt the Fairy leave her shoulder, but she did not dare to turn her head to look after her. She walked on, looking very sober, but not taking Aunt Isabella's words *very* much to heart, since she had not been feeling either proud or ashamed. She had guessed it was all a sort of game of the Fairy's, and had entered into the spirit of it accordingly. A moment or two later the Fairy alighted on her shoulder once more.

Then—clitter! clatter! clatter! on the pavement!—they all looked round hastily, to see a collection of hairpins scattered on the ground!

'Isabella! your hair!' gasped Aunt Florence.

A long thin grey snake of hair was uncoiling down Aunt Isabella's back. And some one was coming up the path behind them, and two people were advancing towards them from the front!

Aunt Isabella, with a little shriek of dismay, seized her hair and pressed it up to her head. 'My hairpins! Quick!' she exclaimed.

Aunt Florence and Pamela dived for the hairpins, and then stood holding them out to Aunt Isabella, who, hastily and with fumbling fingers, had to pin her hair up before the half-averted gaze of two would-be polite people in the road and the open stare of a frankly rude errand-boy on the pavement, not to mention the possible interested spectators from the houses on either side.

At last, after what seemed an endless time to Aunt Isabella, the hair was pinned up somehow, the hat put straight, and the Aunts, with heated, embarrassed faces, hurried on towards home, while Pamela almost had to run to keep up with them.

'How could it have happened? You didn't wash your hair last night, did you?' inquired Aunt Florence.

'No!' snapped Aunt Isabella.

'It's extraordinary!' said Aunt Florence. 'What *could* have made it suddenly come down like that?'

'Discipline!' whispered the Fairy to Pamela.

CHAPTER VIII

THREE WISHES

‘SHALL we have a little holiday now from being so good and kind to the Aunts, and just enjoy ourselves?’ suggested the Fairy.

It was after lunch. Pamela had been sent out into the garden, to her great joy, and now they were both back at the grassy bank. Pamela was sprawling full-length on the grass in the sunshine, while the Fairy lay on a hammock of lupin leaves and swayed backwards and forwards in a lazy manner.

‘Oh yes!’ said Pamela. ‘It’s so lovely just being out here by ourselves!’

There was a warm feeling of contentment over everything and everybody; even the bees buzzed more lazily than usual, as if they shared that after-dinner feeling. Pamela and the Fairy lay silent for a whole minute. Then Pamela sighed.

‘But I shan’t be able to stay here all afternoon,’ she said sadly. ‘Oh, what a bother walks are!’ And at the thought of them the contented feeling left her and she sat up.

‘Do you always have to go for walks?’ asked the Fairy.

‘Yes, always,’ said Pamela. ‘Morning walks with the Aunts and afternoon walks with Jane.’

‘It sounds rather dull,’ said the Fairy.

‘Oh, it is!’ sighed Pamela. ‘But when I went for walks with Nanny, that was quite different.’

‘What did you do then?’ asked the Fairy.

‘Well, sometimes we used to go to the fields and pick flowers and make daisy-chains, or pick up chestnuts and acorns and lovely things.’

‘Do you never go to the fields now?’

‘I’ve never been once this summer,’ said Pamela sadly. ‘Jane only likes roads with houses and people. But she never talks to other nurses as Nanny did, and then I could walk with their children. The Aunts and Jane never let me talk to other children. It’s all quite, quite different now. And I simply *hate* walks! Oh, I do wish we could stay in the garden all the afternoon!’

As it happened, just after Pamela said these words, Aunt Florence, in the drawing-room, echoed the same idea.

‘Why not let her stay in the garden this afternoon?’ she suggested to Aunt Isabella. ‘Then no one will see her.’

They had been discussing with grave faces the events of the morning.

‘She enjoys staying in the garden,’ objected Aunt Isabella. ‘It seems like rewarding her for wrong-doing. And yet I will not have all the ridiculous women in Merlinton telling her how nice she looks with her short hair. It is monstrous! It’s all part of this modern craze of making a fuss of children and filling their heads with an idea of their own importance. Enough to ruin any child! I will not have it with Pamela!’

‘But haven’t you noticed a change in Pamela the last two days?’ asked Aunt Florence. ‘Quite apart from her naughtiness yesterday, she seems so—so—I don’t quite know how to describe it, but there is almost a kind of independence about her that she never had before.’

‘I *have* noticed it,’ said Aunt Isabella, grimly, ‘and it has got to be checked.’

‘I thought she would have been overcome with shame this morning when every one noticed her hair, but not at all, she took it quite calmly!’ said Aunt Florence.

‘She was set up by all the praise she received,’ said

Aunt Isabella severely ; ' that is why I will not have the same thing happening again when she is out with Jane. And yet Jane must go to the grocer's. It is so tiresome Cook's forgetting the sugar this morning ! '

' She might do her sewing out in the garden,' suggested Aunt Florence. ' She dislikes sewing, so that would not be making things too pleasant for her.'

' I really believe that would be the best plan,' agreed Aunt Isabella. ' Give her a good long seam to do by tea-time, and that will keep her from idling and playing while we are out.'

' Pamela! Pamela!' called Aunt Florence down the garden a little later.

' Bother!' said Pamela, getting up slowly.

' One can't forget them for long,' remarked the Fairy pensively, still swaying on her lupin leaves.

' Pamela! Pamela!' called Aunt Florence louder.

' Coming, Aunt Florence!' answered Pamela. ' I'll see what it is for,' she whispered to the Fairy, ' and then come back and tell you. I'll just leave my handkerchief for an excuse,' she added with great forethought, and carefully took her clean handkerchief from her pocket and dropped it on the ground. Then she ran to meet Aunt Florence.

Presently she returned with a beaming face, carrying her sewing.

' The Aunts are just going off to a drawing-room meeting, and Jane is going shopping, and *I'm* to stay here all the afternoon!' she said breathlessly. ' Why it's just what I was wishing for! You *do* give wishes, Fairy, you said you didn't, but I know you do! '

' Let's pretend I do, then,' said the Fairy, sitting up and looking very wide awake all of a sudden. ' Now you have had one wish; so you ought to have two more, because Fairies always give three, you know; it is the

magic number. But they mustn't be *too* big wishes, because you see I am only a little fairy!'

And the Fairy sprang up and started swinging gaily backwards and forwards on a dangling rose spray, while she sang this little song to the tune of 'Sing a Song of Sixpence':

‘Wish a wish of happiness,
And p'raps it may come true;
Such a lot of lovely things
All the world through:
Hidden in the gardens,
Floating on the breeze,
Heaps and heaps of happiness,
So wish for what you please!’

‘Oh, I wish I could swing like that!’ exclaimed Pamela.

‘Well, that’s easy enough,’ said the Fairy, ‘of course you can!’

‘But I’m too big to swing on flowers,’ objected Pamela.

‘That depends on what you call flowers,’ said the Fairy.

‘But just look at me!’ said Pamela, jumping up and standing on the edge of the flower-bed.

‘But just look at that!’ said the Fairy, pointing to the walnut tree. ‘A tree is only a bigger kind of flower.’

‘I never thought of that!’ exclaimed Pamela.

‘Come and try!’ cried the Fairy, and she darted off to the tree, and Pamela ran down the little bank and followed under the shade of the branches.

The Fairy perched on a bough above Pamela’s head. ‘Catch hold and swing!’ she cried.

Pamela caught hold, gave a little push with her feet, and swung gently backwards and forwards. The bough swayed beautifully, and she swung higher and higher.

‘Oh! oh! oh!’ she cried joyfully, ‘how lovely it is! how lovely!’

The Fairy leapt to an overhanging spray and, clinging there, swung too. Backwards and forwards, higher and higher, they swung and laughed and sang and shouted for joy. It was the most glorious swinging!

Presently a voice exclaimed:—‘Well I never!’—but it was not an unfriendly voice. Pamela dropped from her bough so suddenly that she nearly fell over backwards. But she recovered herself and looked round to see who it was. To her relief it was only Cook, standing at the top of the grassy steps, looking quite pleased and smiling.

‘That was fine!’ said Cook. ‘Why, I used to swing on an old apple-tree, just like that, when I was a child myself. Let’s see you have another turn!’

So Pamela caught hold again, and swung her hardest for Cook’s benefit, while the Fairy peeped out through the leaves at Cook, and liked the look of her kind face.

‘That’s grand!’ exclaimed Cook, as Pamela landed on the grass again, quite out of breath. ‘It surely isn’t the first time you’ve tried, is it?’

‘Yes it is,’ panted Pamela, ‘the very first.’

‘Well, you’re a clever one then,’ said Cook admiringly. ‘Now I must be getting back to my cake, or it’ll burn. I came hurrying down thinking maybe children had climbed over the wall. But you just play away, and make all the noise you want, for there’s no one in to hear but me.’

And Cook stumped away up the path by the vegetable patch to the back door, saying to herself it was a mercy to see the child playing and enjoying herself like other children for once.

‘Wasn’t she kind?’ whispered Pamela to the Fairy. ‘I *was* glad it was only Cook!’

‘I like Cook,’ said the Fairy.

‘So do I,’ said Pamela. ‘Only I don’t often see her

because the Aunts don't like me to go into the kitchen. And she is nearly always in there cooking things, you see.'

'It's so funny to me,' observed the Fairy, 'the way the Aunts never want you to do the things that are nicest. Oh, I forgot!' she added, 'we're not thinking about the Aunts this afternoon! Let's swing them away from us again!'

Up, and down, and up again went the Fairy, and up, and down, and up again went Pamela, swooping higher and higher, while the bough swayed backwards and forwards as if carrying her of its own accord; till at last she could hold on no longer, and tumbled laughing to the ground.

The Fairy flew down beside her. 'Now you have had your second wish,' she said. 'What will you wish for the last?'

'Oh, let me think!' exclaimed Pamela, sitting up. As she did so her eyes fell on the white object on the grass bank.

'My sewing!' she exclaimed in horror, 'I quite forgot it!'

She jumped up to get it, and, sitting on the bank, unfolded it before the Fairy. 'Just look what Aunt Florence has given me to do, and all before tea-time!' She held out a long seam, as long as her arms could stretch. 'I can never do it now!'

'What is it meant to be?' asked the Fairy, looking at the shapeless white thing with a puzzled air.

'It's going to be a nightgown for me,' said Pamela dolefully. 'Aunt Florence has tacked it for me, but I've got to make it, and it's such horrid stuff to sew! I know!' she exclaimed with a sudden inspiration. 'I wish this seam could be done all in a minute!'

'Put it down beside you, and lie down and shut your eyes,' commanded the Fairy.

Pamela did as she was told.

‘Wake up!’ cried the Fairy.

Pamela sat up. ‘Why, I haven’t been asleep!’ she said rather surprised. ‘I only just shut my eyes, and you said “wake up”.’

‘Well then, the sewing is done all in a minute,’ said the Fairy with a funny little smile.

Pamela gave a little exclamation, and picked up the work, which was just where she had put it down. Sure enough—the long seam was all sewn, and with the neatest little stitches!

‘Fairy!’ exclaimed Pamela, ‘how could you have done it?’

‘Aha!’ said the Fairy. ‘If you haven’t been to sleep you ought to have seen.’

‘But surely I couldn’t have been to sleep!’ said Pamela, puzzled. ‘Was it magic? Did you do it? Was I asleep?’

‘Perhaps it was, perhaps it wasn’t! perhaps I did, perhaps I didn’t! perhaps you were, perhaps you weren’t!’ chanted the Fairy, dancing round in a little circle, looking very mischievous.

‘Oh, Fairy!’ said Pamela, ‘you might tell me!’

‘Oh, Pamela!’ said the Fairy, ‘you have had your third wish, and that ought to be enough for you!’ And she danced round, singing:

‘That is the way that Fairies work,
Fairies work, Fairies work,
That is the way that Fairies work,
On a summer’s day in the garden!’

Then she suddenly flew back on to the bank beside Pamela. ‘Now, if you will be good and not ask any more questions, I will tell you a story.’

‘Oh yes!’ said Pamela, clapping her hands, ‘I won’t ask another thing! *Please* tell me a story!’

So the Fairy told a long, lovely story of Fairyland, while Pamela lay on the grass and listened, feeling so happy this beautiful afternoon that it seemed almost like a dream, or as if she had been enchanted into quite another child, instead of the Pamela Perry who lived at the Laurels with Aunt Isabella and Aunt Florence.

But presently steps were heard coming down the path.

Pamela wriggled herself up the bank, and peeped over the flower-bed. 'The Aunts!' she said in amazement. 'Why, it *can't* be tea-time already!'

The Fairy flew up on to a tall rose to get a good view. She quickly flew down again. 'How very queerly they are dressed!' she said.

'Those are their Sunday clothes,' said Pamela, 'for the drawing-room meeting.'

The Aunts appeared at the top of the grassy steps, and Pamela hastily jumped up.

'Why were you lying idling there? Where is your work?' asked Aunt Isabella.

'It's finished, Aunt Isabella.'

'I hope it is properly done?' said Aunt Florence. 'Let me see it.' And she placed her spectacles on her nose.

Pamela picked up the sewing and began turning it round to discover the seam, but Aunt Florence gave a little scream and snatched it from her.

'Don't touch it! Your hands! You naughty child, look at your hands!' she exclaimed.

Pamela looked, and—well, they were pretty dirty. Swinging on trees does make hands rather black.

'How did your hands get into that state?' asked Aunt Isabella sternly. 'What on earth have you been doing now?'

'I was—I was—playing,' Pamela answered rather hesitatingly.

‘Playing!’ said Aunt Isabella indignantly.

‘You could have had no time for playing if you had done your work properly,’ said Aunt Florence. ‘Remember it will all have to be unpicked if it is badly done.’ And she examined the stitches closely through her spectacles. But, to her surprise, she found all the work most beautifully neat. ‘That is better done than usual,’ she allowed. ‘And I am glad to see you evidently didn’t sew it with those dirty hands.’

‘Oh no!’ said Pamela promptly and truthfully.

‘They are simply disgraceful!’ said Aunt Isabella sharply, too intent on the dirty hands to pay any attention to the sewing. ‘Really, Pamela, cannot you be trusted to stay alone in the garden without dirtying yourself like that? *How* did you——’ then she suddenly broke off. ‘What was that?’ she exclaimed indignantly, looking all round.

‘What was what?’ asked Aunt Florence, surprised.

‘I distinctly felt something tweak my nose!’ said Aunt Isabella in an offended tone. She fixed her eyes severely on Pamela, but Pamela had never moved. The Fairy had though.

‘Really, Isabella, there was nothing there, it must have been your imagination,’ said Aunt Florence, rather enjoying being the one to say this for a change, as it was usually said to herself.

‘It was *not* my imagination!’ exclaimed Aunt Isabella, still more indignantly. ‘I distinctly felt it. There must be some large, objectionable insect flying about!’

At this description of herself the Fairy was seized with a fit of laughter, and had to fly a little way off.

‘There! I heard something!’ declared Aunt Isabella, turning her head angrily from side to side.

‘But there isn’t anything,’ protested Aunt Florence, after looking all round too at the mention of an insect.

‘And if there had been it couldn’t have touched your nose without your seeing it. Why, even if the smallest fly settles on one’s nose one sees it at once, and looking double its size too.’

‘Florence,’ said Aunt Isabella in her most awful voice, ‘I have told you I felt something tweak my nose!’

Aunt Florence subsided, and moved into the background.

‘Pamela, go in at once and wash your hands!’

‘Yes, Aunt Isabella,’ said Pamela, and ran up the steps and along the path to the house, only too glad to escape further questioning.

The Fairy soon flew after her, and Pamela heard her singing softly:

‘The Aunt was in the garden,
In her Sunday clothes,
There came a horrid insect
And tweaked at her nose!’

‘Oh, Fairy!’ exclaimed Pamela, trying not to laugh, ‘how could you?’

‘It was all kindness,’ explained the Fairy. ‘I thought she was going to get crosser and scolding-er about your hands, so it was better to stop her quick.’

She flew gaily on ahead of Pamela, and then came curving back again. ‘Besides,’ she added with a mischievous twinkle, ‘her nose is rather long, isn’t it?’

CHAPTER IX

EARLY TO BED

PAMELA did not have regular preparation to do, but she was usually given what the Aunts called an improving occupation after tea. Sometimes she sat in the drawing-room and did her sewing, or read aloud a book chosen by the Aunts, and not at all what she would have chosen herself. Sometimes she was given poetry to learn, or a passage to copy from her history book, and then she sat in the schoolroom alone. To-day she had done her sewing already, so Aunt Florence produced the poetry book and sent her off to the schoolroom with a piece to learn. It was called 'Excelsior'.

'Learn the first three verses,' said Aunt Florence.

'I *am* glad it's schoolroom and not drawing-room to-day,' exclaimed Pamela, when she and the Fairy were safely inside and the door shut.

'What would drawing-room be like?' asked the Fairy.

'Sitting with the Aunts, and not being able to talk to each other,' said Pamela.

'This is *much* better,' said the Fairy decidedly. 'But what is Excelsior? What does it mean?'

'It's the name of this poetry,' said Pamela. 'I don't know what it means.'

'Read it and see,' suggested the Fairy wisely.

Pamela read very well indeed for her age, and she started to read aloud. She read on steadily, only stumbling sometimes over the very longest words, and the Fairy sat on the table quite close, and listened and looked puzzled. And the more she listened the more puzzled she looked. At the end of the sixth verse she stood up and motioned Pamela to stop.

‘I think that’s quite enough,’ she said politely, ‘and I still don’t know what *Excelsior* means.’

‘P’raps it doesn’t mean anything,’ said Pamela, quite glad to leave off and take a long breath. ‘Poetry often doesn’t, I think, though some is very nice.’

‘Oh yes! I like nonsense poetry too,’ said the Fairy. ‘But I don’t care much for *this* poetry.’

‘Nor do I,’ agreed Pamela, ‘but I’ve got to learn three verses.’

‘I suppose this is the sort of thing the Aunts *do* like,’ said the Fairy with a little sigh. ‘Oh well, it will be kind to let them have it! Say the part you have to learn again!’

Pamela slowly read out:

‘The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore, ’mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!’

His brow was sad; his eye beneath
Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,
And like a silver clarion rung
The accents of that unknown tongue,
Excelsior!

In happy homes he saw the light
Of household fires gleam warm and bright;
Above the spectral glaciers shone,
And from his lips escaped a groan,—’

‘“Excelsior!”’ said the Fairy cheerfully. ‘Is that all?’

‘Yes, that’s all,’ said Pamela, ‘but it’s very difficult.’

‘Let’s sing it!’ suggested the Fairy. ‘It might sound nicer.’ And she began humming to herself and then sang it all through to a gay little tune.

‘That *does* sound nicer!’ said Pamela admiringly. ‘And how clever you are, you know the words already!’

As the schoolroom was at the back of the house and

the drawing-room was on the opposite side of the hall in front, the Aunts heard nothing, while Pamela and the Fairy sang together gaily.

‘What a *good* way of learning poetry!’ exclaimed Pamela. ‘I’m beginning to know it already!’ And they both sang away again.

Soon Pamela declared she quite knew it. And the Fairy declared that she did too, and she must just fly round the garden once to forget it again.

So the Fairy flew off all round the garden, and Pamela hung out of the window in the sunshine, watching her as far as she could, and thinking how glorious it would be if only she could fly out too.

Presently, back came the Fairy, bubbling over with happiness. She darted in through the window and began dancing on the table, singing a little song she just made up as she went along:

‘Oh, the grasshoppers are hopping
In the green, green grass,
And the fuchsia buds are popping
In the sunshine as I pass;
And delphiniums are so blue
That I don’t know what to do!
So I sing it all to you,
With tra la la la las!
Tra la la la la la la la la la las!’

This made Pamela laugh, and it took her fancy so much that she joined in and sang too. And they sang it over and over again, and while the Fairy danced on the table, Pamela danced round the room.

But—suddenly—the door opened, and there stood Aunt Florence in the doorway, perfectly amazed.

‘Pamela!’ she gasped.

Pamela hastily sat down in her place at the table, trying, unsuccessfully, to look as if she had never left it.

‘Pamela! *what* are you doing now?’ demanded Aunt Florence.

‘Learning poetry,’ said Pamela in a small voice.

‘Prancing round the table and shrieking is *not* the way to learn poetry, as you know very well!’ said Aunt Florence. ‘I couldn’t believe my ears when I opened the drawing-room door and heard all that commotion! I cannot think what has come over you! What will you be doing next?’

Pamela did not know, so she said nothing. But, as a matter of fact, what she did next was still more surprising to her poor Aunt.

Aunt Florence sat down and took up the book from the table.

‘Well, let me hear what you have learnt,’ she said.

Perhaps Pamela had rather lost her head by being surprised in the middle of her dancing and singing by Aunt Florence. Or perhaps so much singing had muddled things up in her brain. Anyway, she fixed her eyes on the table-cloth and—instead of beginning:

‘The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed—’

she began:

‘Oh, the grasshoppers are hopping
In the green, green grass,
And the fuchsia buds are popping
In the sunshine as I pass;
And delphiniums are so blue
That I don’t know what to do!
So—’

Suddenly Pamela felt something was wrong, and broke off abruptly.

Aunt Florence sat a moment, quite dumbfounded. Then—‘Pamela!’ she exclaimed. ‘That is not what I gave you to learn!’

Pamela looked rather embarrassed. 'I—I'm sorry,' she stammered, 'I thought it was right.'

'Where did you learn such—such *rubbish*?' demanded Aunt Florence. 'I am sure it is not in your poetry book?'

'N-no,' said Pamela.

'Then how did you learn it? Tell me at once!'

'It—it just came to my head,' faltered Pamela. It was the best explanation she could think of, for after all it *had* come to her head from the Fairy's singing.

But Aunt Florence thought she meant she had made it up.

'Pamela,' she asked, 'do you feel quite well?'

'Yes, thank you,' said Pamela, surprised at this sudden question.

Aunt Florence looked at her very hard, while Pamela sat trying vainly to remember how 'Excelsior' *did* begin.

'She looks very flushed,' thought Aunt Florence, 'and her eyes seem unnaturally bright. I don't believe she can be well! Wait here, Pamela,' she said quite kindly, and closing the poetry book, without ever hearing 'Excelsior', she left the room.

Pamela and the Fairy looked at each other in consternation.

'I said the wrong poetry!' exclaimed Pamela.

'That *was* a mistake to make!' said the Fairy. 'I don't think Aunt Florence liked it as much as the other.'

'Do you think she has gone to tell Aunt Isabella? But she didn't look cross,' said Pamela, much perplexed.

'She looked funny,' said the Fairy.

In the meantime Aunt Florence had hurried into the drawing-room.

'Isabella!' she exclaimed, 'I *know* Pamela is not well! She is most peculiar!'

'What is she doing now?' asked Aunt Isabella impatiently, looking up from her accounts.

‘She is composing poetry!’ said Aunt Florence.

‘What do you mean? What nonsense!’ said Aunt Isabella.

‘Of course it is nonsense,’ said Aunt Florence, referring to the poetry, ‘but it is quite true! First I found her capering about the room and singing, just as she was in the garden yesterday afternoon. And then, when I heard her repeat her poetry, she repeated a whole lot of rubbish, like nothing that is in her poetry book.’

‘It simply means she hadn’t learnt it properly, of course,’ said Aunt Isabella.

‘But this wasn’t *attempting* to be like it!’ exclaimed Aunt Florence. ‘I gave her ‘Excelsior’ to learn, and what she *said* was all about grasshoppers hopping and something else popping!’

‘It sounds like impertinence,’ said Aunt Isabella.

‘I know, but she looked quite serious over it. And she does look unnaturally flushed and excited. I am sure she is sickening for something.’

‘I think myself it is all naughtiness,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘But you may as well take her temperature. If she is feverish of course we must call in Dr. Langley.’ She returned to her accounts, and Aunt Florence went back to the schoolroom.

‘Pamela,’ she said, still quite kindly, ‘come upstairs with me; I want to take your temperature.’

‘Oh, Aunt Florence, I’m perfectly well!’ protested Pamela.

But Aunt Florence was firm and led the way to her room, Pamela and the Fairy following.

Aunt Florence’s room was over the dining-room. It was exceedingly neat, but the wall-paper, the furniture, and the pictures were all rather ugly and uninteresting. The Fairy looked all round, but did not find anything to please her. She flew to the window, which was wide

open top and bottom, and peeped out. Down below was the front garden, with its little straight path, its prim flower-beds, and the two laurel bushes standing like sentinels one on each side of the garden, quite close to the house. Beyond this short bit of garden came the road, and opposite was another house.

‘Dull!’ thought the Fairy, and flew back to see what Pamela was doing.

She was sitting on a chair with a little tube of glass in her mouth, while Aunt Florence stood beside her with her watch in her hand.

Pamela caught the Fairy’s surprised gaze, and—she couldn’t help it—she giggled out loud, and had to take the thermometer out of her mouth for fear of biting it.

‘Pamela!’ said Aunt Florence severely, ‘put the thermometer back at once! and don’t be so silly, giggling for nothing at all! Now I must time it all over again!’ She consulted her watch, but to herself she was saying, ‘The child is certainly hysterical.’

Pamela made a great effort to keep a solemn face, and she fixed her eyes on a brown flower in the carpet, and managed to hold the thermometer in her mouth the right amount of time. Aunt Florence then removed it and looked at it very earnestly.

‘Normal!’ she announced. ‘Well, that is satisfactory; you haven’t got a temperature, anyway.’ She looked at Pamela rather puzzled. ‘I think I shall give you a dose of sal volatile,’ she said, ‘and then you had better go to bed and have a nice, long rest.’

‘Oh, Aunt Florence! *why?*’ exclaimed Pamela, who felt thoroughly well and not at all ready for bed, and still more unready for medicine.

‘You are not being sent to bed for a punishment,’ explained Aunt Florence. ‘You shall have your supper brought up to you. But I think you will be the better

for a long rest. Now Pamela, you know we never allow argument,' she added as Pamela opened her mouth to try to protest. 'You must do as you are told.'

She opened her medicine-cupboard and brought out a little bottle and a medicine-glass, and proceeded to measure out a dose of sal volatile for poor Pamela.

'Now,' she said, 'drink it up! I will let Jane know that you are going to bed now,' and, leaving Pamela glass in hand, Aunt Florence left the room.

Pamela looked despairingly at the Fairy, who was back on the window-sill. 'But I don't *want* medicine!' she said. 'I'm absolutely well!'

'Is it nasty?' asked the Fairy.

'Horrible, I expect,' said Pamela. 'Aunt Florence gives dreadful medicines. I do take them when I'm ill. But now I'm as well as well! And people oughtn't to take medicine when they are well. I've heard Aunt Isabella say that to Aunt Florence!'

'That laurel bush is rather faded-looking; perhaps *it* isn't very well,' said the Fairy thoughtfully, pointing to the bush close under Aunt Florence's window.

Pamela looked at the laurel bush. And then she looked at the Fairy. And then the sal volatile splashed down on to the laurel!

'It isn't naughty not to take medicine when you *know* you are quite well,' Pamela said rather apologetically as she hurriedly put the glass down on the wash-hand-stand.

'And it *may* do the laurel good,' said the Fairy hopefully.

Jane was heard on the stairs.

'Oh, what a bother to have to go to bed so soon!' whispered Pamela to the Fairy.

'We needn't be very quick about going,' whispered back the Fairy.



JANE STRUGGLED
TO UNLOOSE
HERSELF — — —

And they weren't.

'Where is your comb, Miss Pamela?' asked Jane irritably. 'I'm sure I saw it lying there a minute ago.'

'I haven't moved it, Jane,' said Pamela truthfully.

Jane looked from the dressing-table to the floor, and from the floor to the chest of drawers, and then on the wash-hand-stand, and on every chair, and on the bed; and Pamela pretended to look, too. But the comb could not be found until Jane, who was determined not to give up till she found it, shook the white dressing-table cover off with a jerk, and there lay the comb on the bare wood.

'How ever could it have got under there?' demanded Jane wrathfully. But Pamela, who had seen the Fairy gently push it under when Jane's back was turned, did not tell her.

Poor Pamela's hair was combed rather hard after this, till presently she gave a little 'oh!' at a special tug, and then the comb flew out of Jane's fingers almost to the other end of the room.

'What ever are you doing, jerking the comb out of my hand like that?' asked Jane crossly.

But Pamela had done nothing.

Jane picked it up and set to work as vigorously as before, but a moment later the same thing happened again, and the comb jumped right into the water-jug.

'Drat the thing!' exclaimed Jane, fishing it out, 'it might be bewitched!' And she laid it on the wash-hand-stand to dry.

Next Jane's apron-strings got mysteriously entangled on a drawer handle on the chest of drawers. It was a white handle that had come rather loose, and the apron-string was caught and twisted round between the handle and the drawer. Jane struggled to unloose herself, but only made matters worse, and at last she had to accept

Pamela's offer to help her. Though Pamela really did her best, it took her some little time to set Jane free, and all the time the Fairy was sitting on the edge of the chest of drawers, smiling sweetly at her handiwork.

Then Pamela's tooth-brush couldn't be found.

'You've gone and hidden it yourself!' exclaimed Jane, who really was justified in being rather cross by now.

'No, really, Jane, I haven't!' protested Pamela.

'Well, just help me look,' snapped Jane.

With many grumbles, and much rattling of the crockery on the wash-hand-stand, Jane hunted for the tooth-brush, and Pamela hunted too, for this time she really did not know where the Fairy had hidden it. And the Fairy, perfectly delighted, flew about the room from perch to perch, and laughed silently to Pamela.

After a long search it was found sticking out of one of Pamela's blue bedroom slippers. It was Pamela who found it, and Jane looked at her very suspiciously.

'Tooth-brushes don't get into slippers by themselves!' she said grimly.

'Perhaps they fall in,' suggested Pamela, though not in a very convincing tone.

Jane looked very unbelieving.

'Truly, Jane, I didn't put it there,' Pamela assured her.

Jane felt very much puzzled and put out, but she knew Pamela to be a truthful child. 'Brush your teeth, and don't waste any more time,' she said shortly. 'What's the use of your being sent to bed early when you take all this time over it, I should like to know!'

As Pamela was brushing her teeth now, she was able to smile as broadly as she liked at this.

Presently Jane departed, leaving Pamela sitting up in bed, munching her bread and butter and drinking her milk, while the Fairy sat beside her on the pillow, also

drinking milk. Pamela had found among her treasures an acorn-cup, which, of course, was the very thing for the Fairy.

They could only talk in whispers, as the Aunts had come upstairs to change into the old black dresses they wore every evening.

‘By the time Jane takes the things away, it won’t be any earlier than usual!’ said Pamela delightedly.

‘Yes, I filled up the time nicely,’ said the Fairy, quite pleased with herself.

Much later that evening Jane appeared at the drawing-room door.

The Aunts looked up from their knitting. ‘Well, Jane?’ inquired Aunt Isabella.

‘If you please’m, I thought you ought to know that Miss Pamela is sitting up in bed, talking away to herself, and not thinking of going to sleep.’

‘Talking to herself!’ echoed the Aunts in surprise.

‘Talking away out loud, and no one in the room with her,’ said Jane, not knowing, of course, that that was not altogether true. ‘I was taking round the hot water, going soft on the landing so as not to wake her, when I heard her voice, talking away for all the world as if she was entertaining company, and I opened the door sudden, and there she was sitting bolt upright, though she slid down under the clothes pretty quick when she saw me.’

‘You are sure she wasn’t talking in her sleep?’ inquired Aunt Florence.

‘She was as wide awake as I am,’ replied Jane.

‘Have you ever known her do this before?’ asked Aunt Isabella.

‘No, never,’ said Jane, ‘not until this morning, when I called her and found her talking away then, so that I thought one of you ladies must be in the room with her.’

And Cook did say she was singing and shouting away in the garden this afternoon, quite unlike her ordinary.'

The Aunts looked at each other.

'I shall send round a note to Dr. Langley in the morning,' said Aunt Isabella decidedly. 'We can't have this sort of thing going on. I will write it at once.' And she moved across to the writing-table.

'I will go up and see what she is doing now,' said Aunt Florence anxiously, and she hurried upstairs, while Jane withdrew to the kitchen.

Pamela was lying very still in bed, with tightly shut eyes, when Aunt Florence came in.

'Pamela!' said Aunt Florence. There was no answer. 'Pamela!' Still no answer. 'Can she have fallen asleep already?' thought Aunt Florence.

She hesitated a few moments, but all there was to be seen of Pamela above the bed-clothes looked very fast asleep. Aunt Florence did not dare to say any more for fear of waking her. She looked round the room, and, being of a very tidying disposition, at once noticed a piece of pink silk material lying on the window-sill. She tiptoed across the room, picked it up—little thinking she was shaking a fairy out of it—folded it, and laid it on the chest of drawers. Then, very quietly, she left the room.

If she had happened to open the door a minute later she would have been surprised to see the piece of pink silk flying back to the window-sill, while Pamela's head peeped up over the sheet.

'I should like to shake *her* out of bed!' said the indignant Fairy, as she alighted on the window-sill and wrapped herself up once more.

At the thought of the tiny Fairy trying to shake the large Aunt Florence out of bed Pamela had to pop her head completely under the bed-clothes this time, to smother her laughter.

CHAPTER X

THE DOCTOR'S VISIT

ON the following morning, when Jane came into the room with the hot water, she was amazed to find Pamela, in her night-gown, sitting on the window-sill. This was not the way for an invalid to behave!

‘Miss Pamela!’ she exclaimed sharply, ‘get back into your bed this very instant! Sitting in a draught like that, and you having the doctor to see you this morning!’

‘What?’ exclaimed Pamela, who had been startled out of a whispered conversation with the Fairy, and was now so much surprised by this piece of news from Jane that she sat where she was, staring with round eyes.

‘Get back to your bed this instant!’ repeated Jane. ‘What would your Aunts say, I should like to know!’

At this, Pamela scuttled back and dived into bed, while the Fairy flew over and perched on the rails at the foot of the bed and looked at Jane in an interested manner. Another animal of the Aunt kind, she might have been saying to herself.

‘You’re not to get up this morning until the doctor’s been,’ said Jane, banging the hot-water can into the basin.

‘But, *Jane*, what is the doctor coming to see me for?’ asked Pamela, bewildered. ‘I’m not ill! Why must I stay in bed?’

‘It’s your Aunts’ orders,’ replied Jane shortly, and she stalked out of the room, deaf to more protests and objections from Pamela, and only pausing at the door to say that she would bring up bread and milk for breakfast presently.

Pamela gazed at the Fairy in dismay. 'What shall we do?' she whispered when she felt that Jane was safely out of hearing.

'Is a doctor a horrid sort of thing, like an Ogre?' asked the Fairy. 'Shall we run away and hide from him?'

'Oh no!' said Pamela hastily, 'I don't think we'd better do that! Our doctor is a nice, kind man.'

'Oh, then we'll wait and see him,' said the Fairy graciously.

'Yes,' said Pamela, 'but doctors only come when people are ill. What will he do when he finds I'm quite well?'

'I don't know,' said the Fairy. 'What does a doctor do when you're ill?'

'Well,' said Pamela hesitatingly, trying to remember a former visit from the doctor, 'he looks at your tongue—'

'He can't look at *my* tongue,' said the Fairy decidedly, 'because he can't look at me at all!'

'He only looks at the person's tongue who is in bed,' explained Pamela, not very clearly, but the Fairy understood all right. 'And then he asks how you are feeling to-day, and—and'—she suddenly remembered the measles—'if you have any spots.'

'Spots like a ladybird?' asked the Fairy, rather surprised.

'Oh no! not black spots—red ones,' said Pamela. 'With some kinds of being ill people have spots.'

'How funny!' said the Fairy. 'And what else does a doctor do?'

'Well,' said Pamela, thinking again, 'well—he says sort of joking things.'

'Oh,' said the Fairy, 'I hope he will say sort of joking things to-day! That will be a nice change from the sort of things the Aunts say.'

'Oh, he isn't a *scrap* like the Aunts!' exclaimed Pamela. 'He is more like my daddy.' And in whispers she tried to explain to the Fairy what a splendid and amusing kind of person her daddy was, and the Fairy listened respectfully, and said how much she would like to see him.

'Oh, so do I want to see him!' sighed Pamela. 'But he can't get home for another year at least. I haven't seen him for ages and ages! But when he *does* come home,' she added, 'I'm going to ask him if I mayn't go to school. I can't ask in a letter because the Aunts always read my letters to see if the spelling is right.'

'If your daddy said you could go to school, would the Aunts let you?' inquired the Fairy.

'Oh yes, they would *then*!' said Pamela, 'because daddies are much more important people than Aunts.'

'I see,' said the Fairy.

Presently the Aunts looked in to see how Pamela was, and repeated the order that she was to stay in bed until the doctor had seen her. And Pamela did not dare to make any further objections to them.

They had to admit to each other as they went downstairs to their breakfast that there did not look much the matter with her.

'Still, it is much better to be on the safe side,' said Aunt Florence, earnestly. 'She has been so *very* odd the last two days.'

'If I had not thought so I should not have sent for Dr. Langley,' said Aunt Isabella crushingly.

When Pamela found herself sharing her breakfast with the Fairy, as she had shared her supper the night before, her spirits began to rise.

'This is nicer than breakfast downstairs,' she said.

'Much nicer!' said the Fairy. 'There are no Aunts.'

'And—' exclaimed Pamela, suddenly stopping eating,

and waving her spoon in the air—‘there won’t be any lessons! I never thought of that! Hurray!’

‘I’ll tell you some more stories instead,’ said the Fairy.

‘Ooh!’ cried Pamela, jiggling up and down in bed, to the great danger of the bread and milk, ‘how lovely!’

So after breakfast, just at the time when Pamela usually settled down to her lessons, she was sitting up in bed, extremely happy, listening to fairy stories. And the Fairy sat close to Pamela’s ear and told them in a gentle voice so that no grown-ups could overhear.

When Dr. Langley arrived he was ushered into the drawing-room, where both Aunts received him, and proceeded to give him a full account of Pamela’s unusual and unsatisfactory behaviour of the last two days: her suddenly expressed desire to go to school; the cutting off of her hair; the dancing about in the garden; climbing a tree; singing, shouting, and talking to herself. Nothing was forgotten. The doctor listened carefully with a solemn face, though his mouth twitched a little when Aunt Florence gravely told him of the verses about grasshoppers hopping, instead of ‘Excelsior’. *He* had learnt ‘Excelsior’ in his young days.

‘She is so *different*,’ Aunt Isabella said.

‘So dreadfully different!’ repeated Aunt Florence.

‘She has never given us so much trouble all the time she has been with us,’ said Aunt Isabella.

‘She has always been a quiet, well-behaved child till now,’ said Aunt Florence.

‘We hope, of course, that there is nothing wrong, but we thought it better to keep her quietly in bed till you had seen her,’ said Aunt Isabella.

‘We wished to be on the safe side,’ said Aunt Florence.

‘Perhaps I had better go up now and have a look at her?’ suggested the doctor.

‘Certainly,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘Florence, will you take Dr. Langley up, while I finish my letters? I will see you when you come down again, Dr. Langley, and hear your report.’

When Dr. Langley was brought into the bedroom, he found a very bright-eyed, cheerful-looking Pamela.

‘Well, you look pretty blooming,’ he said with a kind smile as he shook hands with her.

‘Yes, thank you,’ said Pamela, smiling back at him. *He* didn’t look cross anyway, whatever the Aunts might have been telling him.

Pamela sat up at one end of the bed and looked at the doctor, and the Fairy sat on the bar at the other end and looked at him too. But he only saw Pamela.

‘How are you feeling?’ he asked with a twinkle in his eye, for he did not fancy there was much wrong with this patient.

‘Quite well, thank you,’ answered Pamela politely. ‘I haven’t got a single spot,’ she added.

‘You haven’t got a single spot,’ echoed the doctor. ‘Come, that’s satisfactory anyway! But I can hear you’ve still got a tongue, so let me have a look at that.’

Pamela shot a reminding look at the Fairy as she put out her pink tongue as far as it would go.

‘Splendid!’ said the doctor; ‘that’s the sort of tongue I like to see.’

‘That will do, Pamela,’ put in Aunt Florence hastily, as Pamela seemed in no hurry to withdraw her tongue.

‘Now let’s see if you’ve got a pulse about you,’ said the doctor. He took out his watch and held it in one hand, while he held Pamela’s wrist with the other.

‘Perfectly satisfactory,’ he remarked to Aunt Florence.

Aunt Florence nodded wisely. ‘There was no temperature last night,’ she said.

‘No, I don’t think she is at all feverish,’ said the doctor. At this moment Jane knocked at the door and asked to speak to Aunt Florence.

‘Will you excuse me a moment, Dr. Langley?’ said Aunt Florence, and followed Jane out, and a murmur of voices was heard on the landing. Dr. Langley sat down on the side of the bed.

‘Well, I don’t think there’s much the matter with you,’ he said cheerfully.

‘No,’ agreed Pamela equally cheerfully.

‘What have you been up to, to make your Aunts think you ill?’

Pamela looked at him, and then at the Fairy. She would have liked to tell this kind-looking doctor all about her secret, but the Fairy put her finger on her lips.

‘I’ve been enjoying myself too much—and making a noise,’ she told him after a pause for consideration.

‘Dear me!’ said the doctor, ‘I wonder what sort of nasty medicine I ought to give you for that.’

Pamela knew this was only a joke, but she got a little red.

‘I think p’raps I ought to tell you something,’ she said. ‘I’ve only just remembered. You won’t tell the Aunts, will you?’

‘Not a word,’ said the doctor kindly. ‘You can trust me all right. Doctors never repeat the things their patients tell them.’

‘Well,’ said Pamela, speaking rather quickly to get her confession over, ‘Aunt Florence gave me some medicine last night, and you see I knew I wasn’t ill, and Aunt Isabella did say once people oughtn’t to take medicine when they weren’t ill, and so—so I poured it over the laurel bush.’

She looked anxiously at Dr. Langley to see if he was

greatly shocked, but could not tell anything from his face, which he kept quite immovable.

‘You were quite right to tell me,’ he said. ‘And I don’t think it matters this time, but you mustn’t make a habit of pouring medicine over laurels, you know.’

‘Oh no, I won’t!’ promised Pamela.

Then he smiled at her and she knew that he wasn’t angry.

‘I expect you want to get up now, don’t you?’ he said. ‘It’s very dull stopping in bed, isn’t it, this glorious day?’

Pamela hesitated. ‘It’s nicer than lessons,’ she said at last.

‘Don’t you like lessons?’ asked the doctor.

‘Not with the Aunts,’ said Pamela quickly, and then looked rather ashamed, fearing the doctor might think this a naughty and ungrateful thing to say.

But as a matter of fact he was thinking he would rather stay in bed himself than have lessons from those ladies.

‘I expect you would rather go to school, wouldn’t you?’ he asked, ‘and do lessons with other children?’

‘Oh *yes!*’ exclaimed Pamela. ‘I *wish* I could! But the Aunts won’t let me,’ she added sadly.

The Fairy suddenly flew up and hovered in the air about an inch from Dr. Langley’s ear. Pamela looked anxiously to see what would happen, but the doctor apparently saw and heard nothing, and a few moments later the Fairy was back again on the bar of the bed, with one arm round the brass knob, looking quite settled down again.

Pamela gave a little sigh of relief that no trick had been played on the kind doctor, but he thought it was a sigh about not being able to go to school. A good idea had just come into his head, but he had to keep it all to himself at present.

‘Cheer up!’ he said, ‘you never know what may

happen. When is that daddy of yours coming home again, by the way?’

‘Not till next year anyway,’ said Pamela, ‘and p’raps not then.’

‘You may be sure he’ll come next year if he possibly can,’ said the doctor kindly. ‘He’ll be just as anxious to see you as you are to see him, you know. Is he still in the same place?’

Pamela said he was, whereupon the doctor wrote something down in his little note-book.

‘You know, I knew your daddy when he was just about your age.’

Pamela nodded. ‘I know,’ she said. ‘But I’m not like him, am I?’ she added rather wistfully. ‘The Aunts say I’m not.’

The doctor looked at her. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘you’re more like him now your hair is short than when you had a pigtail.’

‘Oh!’ exclaimed Pamela, much pleased, ‘that’s another reason for wanting to keep it short!’ Then she suddenly remembered how it came to be short, and looked rather confused. She guessed the doctor had been told all about her naughtiness.

‘It’s much more comfortable short, isn’t it?’ said the doctor, who realized that no more scolding could be necessary in this house. Then he got up and went over to the window, by way of changing the subject. ‘What a jolly garden! I expect you enjoy being out there, don’t you?’

‘Yes, it’s lovely,’ said Pamela, ‘specially the part down by the walnut-tree. That’s where I play most.’

Just then Aunt Florence came back, apologizing very much for having been kept so long.

‘That’s quite all right,’ said Dr. Langley, ‘Pamela and I have been enjoying a little conversation together.

And now I don't think there's any need to keep her in bed any longer. My prescription for her is that she gets up and goes out to play in the garden.'

Pamela looked eagerly at Aunt Florence. Aunt Florence looked rather straight down her nose, and hesitated. The idea had been that if Pamela was allowed up she was to go straight to the schoolroom and do lessons till lunch-time. However, the doctor's words could not very well be disregarded.

'Very well,' she said rather grudgingly. 'Pamela, you may get up and go out as Dr. Langley says. Shall we go down to see my sister now, Dr. Langley?'

The doctor shook hands with Pamela, giving an encouraging squeeze with his big hand, and followed Aunt Florence out of the room. To Pamela's surprise, the Fairy flew after him, and just slipped out before he closed the door. She wished to attend the conference downstairs.

While the doctor talked to the Aunts, the Fairy looked all round the drawing-room, which she had hardly seen before. It was a dull, Aunt-like room. There were no bright colours in carpet, curtains, or cretonnes. There wasn't a cushion out of place, or a crumple in a chair-cover. It was all clean and correct and cold. The only pretty things there were the two vases holding the flowers Pamela and the Fairy had picked the morning before.

'One of the good things we've done!' said the Fairy to herself. 'It wasn't wasted after all!'

Aunt Isabella looked even more disapproving than Aunt Florence when she heard that Pamela was to get up and play in the garden.

'If there is nothing the matter with her, and all this has been sheer naughtiness, I think she ought to do her lessons as usual,' she said stiffly.

'I don't think it has all been naughtiness,' said Dr.

Langley hastily. 'Perhaps the hot weather has affected her a little. I think decidedly she would be better in the garden than doing lessons this morning. In fact I should let her spend all to-day in the garden. She will probably do her lessons all the better for it to-morrow.'

When Aunt Isabella gave her unwilling permission to this, he tried to gain a further advantage.

'I think she would be better if she had other children to play with,' he said very firmly. 'It is difficult for a child to fit in with grown-up people all the time. Why not let her go to school, as she has set her heart on it?'

Aunt Isabella looked at him very coldly. 'I do not care for this modern way of giving children things because they set their hearts on them,' she said severely.

But Dr. Langley was not afraid of Aunt Isabella. Also he had a fairy just beside him, though he didn't know it. 'Surely that depends on the kind of thing they set their hearts on,' he said cheerfully. 'School seems to me a very worthy object; and you have a thoroughly good school in this very road. There would be no difficulty about her running off there alone.'

'My sister and I do not approve of schools for little girls,' said Aunt Isabella coldly and definitely. 'We prefer to teach Pamela ourselves.'

'Well, I'm sure it is extremely good of you to take so much trouble,' said Dr. Langley politely, getting up to go. 'But do think it over about the school. I really think it would be for the child's good to be with other children more.'

He shook hands with both Aunts and cheerfully wished them good-bye, receiving only very chilling responses in return.

The Fairy followed the doctor out of the front door.

'I shall do it,' he said to himself, thinking of the idea that had occurred to him upstairs. Then he stepped

into his car and drove off, while the Fairy flew round to the back garden, and danced a little dance of joy at being out among the flowers once more.

Presently Pamela rushed out to find her and ask what she had been doing all this time, but the Fairy laughed and sang and skipped from flower to flower, and refused to talk sensibly. But when they were once more down by the walnut-tree she alighted on Pamela's shoulder.

'I like doctors better than Aunts,' she said. 'They mayn't be very pretty to look at, but there is something nice and fairy-like about them all the same!'

'What were you doing, that time you flew near to Dr. Langley when we were talking?' asked Pamela.

'I was putting an idea into his head,' said the Fairy.

'What idea?' asked Pamela curiously.

'Something nice,' said the Fairy.

And that was all she would say.

But the idea remained in Dr. Langley's head all day, and in the evening he sat down and wrote a letter to Pamela's father.

CHAPTER XI

A WELL-SPENT AFTERNOON

‘I SUPPOSE you couldn’t put some really nice ideas into the Aunts’ heads?’ suggested Pamela in a half hopeful, half doubtful kind of voice. It was after lunch now, but she and the Fairy were back again on the grassy bank.

Lunch had not been a very satisfactory meal. The Aunts had been decidedly irritable, to say the least of it, and, though no doubt the Fairy did it with the best disciplinary intentions, things were not really improved when the top of the pepper-pot fell off into Aunt Isabella’s plate, and more than half the pepper with it. When she had stopped sneezing she was crosser than ever. And Aunt Florence was quite put out to find salt had been sprinkled over her sago pudding, especially as Aunt Isabella declared that she must have done it herself, as there was no salt on *her* helping. While they argued the point, the Fairy was just about to sprinkle some obligingly for Aunt Isabella when Pamela shook her head at her gently. The Fairy had promptly dropped the salt on the table-cloth and skipped back on to the silver lid of the glass biscuit-jar, which she liked, as it showed her own reflection. But both the Aunts turned on Pamela and asked what she meant by shaking her head at nothing in that idiotic fashion.

‘Why *did* you shake your head about the salt?’ the Fairy had asked as soon as they had reached the garden, and Pamela explained that if Aunt Isabella’s pudding had been salty too, then Cook would have been scolded.

It was thinking about lunch-time, and also about the doctor’s visit, that made Pamela ask her question.

‘I keep trying to do the best I can for them, you know,’

replied the Fairy in a slightly injured tone, 'but nothing seems to do them any good. They are every bit as bad as when I saw them first. They haven't got the kind of heads that take ideas into them.'

'Of course, I forgot!' said Pamela; 'that's one of the things they sometimes scold me about—getting ideas into my head.'

'There it is, you see,' observed the Fairy; 'they don't *want* to get any nice, new ideas. They are the most shut-up-tight people I have ever come across. They won't even *try* to catch any happiness or anything nice. Now *you* have caught quite a lot,' she said, looking approvingly at Pamela. 'You look a perfectly different person from the one I found here on Monday. I can see a quite new twinkle coming in your eye.'

'Can you?' said Pamela, smiling very much.

'Yes, and there's a much bigger dimple in your cheek than there was at first. So, you see, when I go back to Fairyland I shall be able to say I did some good here. Twinkles and dimples are considered very important things in Fairyland.'

'Oh Fairy!' exclaimed Pamela, 'of course you have done a tremendous, enormous lot of good. Why, it's the loveliest time in all my life!'

The Fairy looked very pleased and smiling. Fairies like to know they have given mortals happiness.

'I don't know how I shall bear it when you go away,' Pamela added, 'but I'm not thinking about that; I won't!'

'No, don't,' said the Fairy. 'It's never any good thinking about things you don't expect to like, because they're sure to be perfectly, absolutely different from what you think.' Then her smile grew rather mischievous. 'But I don't believe the Aunts are enjoying my visit here. Do you think they are?'

Pamela hesitated between truth and politeness. 'Well —', she began, but the Fairy interrupted her with a silvery little laugh.

'Of course they aren't!' she said. 'But it's all their own faults. I'm happy, and you're happy, and why shouldn't they be happy?'

'Perhaps they're too old?' suggested Pamela.

'Ridiculous nonsense!' said the Fairy. 'No one is too old to be happy. They needn't swing on trees, or —or dance in the moonlight, but they could be happy in other ways. I *will* make them a little happy!' she added emphatically. 'I'll tease and torment them till they *are* happy!'

Pamela couldn't help laughing at this. 'What a funny way to make people happy!' she said.

But the Fairy tossed up her head and said it was a very good way for Aunts.

'Now come and swing again!' she cried. 'I'm tired of thinking!'

'The Aunts may come out!' said Pamela doubtfully.

'Never mind!' said the Fairy. 'It's good for them to see somebody happy.'

'And they have never *told* me not to swing,' said Pamela.

But the Fairy would not have minded if they had. 'Come and swing! Come and swing!' she chanted, and off she flew to the walnut-tree and, holding by a twig, she swung and swayed like a leaf in the wind.

Pamela ran and jumped for the bough of yesterday and swung as gaily and happily as the Fairy, if not quite so gracefully.

But presently the Aunts did come out. With the ugliest of old garden hats on their heads and work-bags over two arms, and folding chairs under the other two arms, they advanced down the garden path. And when

they came in sight of the lower branches of the walnut-tree they stood and stared at the unusual sight they saw. Then, with grim faces, they marched on to the top of the steps.

‘That was a good one! I’m getting higher and higher!’ called out Pamela to the Fairy.

‘Pamela!’ exclaimed both Aunts, speaking like one very loud one.

Pamela let go of the branch in a great hurry and promptly fell on her back with her legs in the air, upon which the Aunts exclaimed ‘Pamela!’ louder than ever.

She picked herself up and went towards them, struggling not to laugh at the Fairy’s face of mischievous amusement as she surveyed the shocked Aunts.

‘*What* are you doing now, Pamela?’ demanded Aunt Isabella.

‘They say that nearly every time they see you!’ whispered the Fairy in her ear, but Pamela tried to look as if she hadn’t heard and gravely told Aunt Isabella that she had been swinging.

‘That is not my idea of proper swinging,’ said Aunt Isabella sharply. ‘Why you should wish to behave like a monkey I can’t imagine.’

‘And just look at your hands!’ said Aunt Florence. ‘That is how you get yourself so dirty!’

‘And why do you shout and call out to yourself in that foolish fashion?’ went on Aunt Isabella. ‘You never used to do such a thing, and now you are making a perfect habit of it. What can the neighbours think?’

‘I should think they would pity us for having such a silly, noisy child about the place,’ said Aunt Florence, answering for Pamela.

‘It is high time you began to behave in a reasonable manner again,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘We cannot put up with any more of this nonsense. Now go in and get your

hands washed, and then fetch *Home Influence* from the drawing-room. We are going to sit out here with our work this afternoon, and you can come and read aloud to us, as you had no lessons this morning. The doctor said you might stay in the garden all day, but there is no reason why you should be idle all the time.'

Pamela started off for the house, not at her quickest pace.

'And bring your chair out with you!' Aunt Florence called after her.

'Oh, what a bother!' exclaimed Pamela to the Fairy as they got out of hearing of the Aunts. 'They hardly ever sit in the garden!'

'Then, as Aunt Isabella would say, it is high time they began to behave in a reasonable manner,' said the Fairy, trying to speak in an Aunt-like voice.

'But they are only doing it to make me read, and spoil all the fun!' protested Pamela. 'And *Home Influence* is not a bit an int'resting book!'

'Never mind!' said the Fairy. 'Being in a garden is so nice that even Aunts must be the better for it in the end. And perhaps we shall be able to cheer them up a little!'

Presently an industrious little group was seated in the shade of the walnut-tree: Aunt Isabella and Aunt Florence, one with her knitting and one with her sewing, sitting up in straight-backed garden chairs—no lolling in deck-chairs for them!—while Pamela sat, reading aloud, on an uncomfortable little canvas camp-chair, with a wooden back which was almost worse than no back at all, as the bar came too high. She had asked to be allowed to sit on the grass, but Aunt Isabella said no, it was ridiculous to wish to sit on the grass when there was a good chair at hand. Pamela and the Fairy privately thought that it was ridiculous to sit on a chair when there was so much good grass; but it is of little use arguing with Aunts.

Pamela read well and clearly, and the Fairy listened intently for a bit, but she found the story dull. Then she looked at Aunt Isabella and Aunt Florence, and their faces were dull too. Aunt Isabella had her eyes fixed fiercely on her knitting, while she worked as if racing against time. Aunt Florence bent her head over her sewing and stitched away like a machine. Neither of them was paying the slightest attention to the dark greenness of the grass where they sat, or to the yellow greenness of the grass where the sun shone upon it, or to the beautiful leafy pattern pictured on the ground where the two met, or to the brightly-coloured flower beds facing them from the top of the grass bank. And Pamela sat on her little chair, not daring to raise her eyes, reading aloud from the improving pages of *Home Influence*.

‘This,’ thought the Aunts, ‘is a well-spent afternoon!’

‘This,’ thought the Fairy, ‘is waste of time!’

She picked a long blade of grass and, perching on the back of Aunt Isabella’s chair, proceeded to tickle her neck. Aunt Isabella jerked her head, shrugged her shoulders, and finally, dropping one of her knitting-needles, brushed angrily at her neck with her hand. The Fairy laughed silently and flew over to Aunt Florence, and tickled her cheek and all round the back of her neck. Aunt Florence, who was nervous of insects, gave a little scream and jumped up, shaking herself wildly. Aunt Isabella and Pamela looked up surprised.

‘What was it?’ exclaimed Aunt Florence, looking all round. ‘Some large insect was crawling over my face and neck! Ugh!’ she shuddered.

‘Probably a fly,’ said Aunt Isabella crushingly. ‘I just felt one myself, but did not think it necessary to make so much fuss about it’

‘It felt much worse than a fly!’ said Aunt Florence, still rather agitated. ‘It felt more like an *earwig*!’

The Fairy was dancing a fairy jig on the grass, and Pamela wondered.

‘Sit down again, Florence,’ commanded Aunt Isabella, ‘you are disturbing us all. If you sit out of doors you must expect insects.’ Aunt Isabella had not forgotten Aunt Florence’s disbelief in the creature that tweaked her nose the day before. ‘Go on reading, Pamela!’

Aunt Florence sat down, with many suspicious glances round, and Pamela began reading again. But she was soon interrupted.

‘It is too tiresome!’ said Aunt Florence, who had been fussing her sewing round about. ‘I must have dropped my needle when I got up! I can’t find it anywhere.’

‘Take another,’ said Aunt Isabella shortly.

‘I only brought out the one,’ complained Aunt Florence. ‘I must find it. It must be in the grass somewhere. Just help me look for it, Pamela, and then we can get on with the reading.’

Aunt Isabella pursed up her lips at this unnecessary disturbance, but she said nothing, and Pamela jumped off her chair gladly and began crawling about the grass in search of the missing needle. Aunt Florence got down on her hands and knees too, but as every time she put her head down to look her spectacles fell off, she was chiefly occupied in picking them up and putting them on again. But even Pamela’s sharp eyes were of no use, for the Fairy had noticed the needle as it fell and had promptly driven it into the ground up to the eye.

‘I’ve made one of them look at the grass, anyway,’ she chuckled to herself as she danced in front of Aunt Florence.

At last Aunt Isabella could stand it no longer. 'It is not worth wasting all this time over a needle,' she declared. 'It is not as if it had been dropped about the house. Get up, Florence, and send Pamela into the house for your needle-book.'

Aunt Florence struggled to her feet, rather hot and red in the face from so much stooping, and Pamela ran off, rejoiced to stretch her legs.

'Don't hurry!' said the Fairy at her ear. 'Give the poor thing a little time to look about the garden.'

'What did you do?' whispered Pamela eagerly.

'Only tickled them with a blade of grass,' said the Fairy carelessly. 'And then—well—I did push the needle into the ground.'

'All work and no play,
Makes Aunt Florence dull and grey!'

she sang aloud, floating across the path from one flower bed to the other, and back again, here on a daisy, there on a delphinium.

'Always busy, never happy,
Makes Aunt Isabella snappy!'

she chanted gaily. 'I must see what I can do for *her* next.'

After a considerable interval the industrious group was re-formed again. Aunt Isabella knitted, Aunt Florence sewed, and Pamela read aloud. But the reading was not quite so good as before. It is difficult to read well when one is expecting a fairy to be up to mischief at any moment. Pamela's attention wandered, and she stumbled over some of the longer words and did not pay proper attention to stops.

'Pamela!' said Aunt Isabella sharply, 'you are reading disgracefully! Go more carefully, and read that last paragraph over again.'

Pamela read it again and ploughed on to the end of the page. Then, oh joy! it was the end of a chapter.

‘That’s the end of the chapter,’ she said hopefully; ‘may I stop now, please?’

Aunt Isabella looked at her. ‘I will tell you when you may stop, Pamela,’ she said coldly. ‘Begin the next chapter, and read slowly and carefully. If you expect to be allowed to stop because you read badly, you are very much mistaken.’

Pamela hastily bent her eyes on the book and began again.

Presently Aunt Isabella’s ball of wool fell on to the ground and rolled a little way off. She gave the wool a sharp jerk to bring it back, but it continued to roll away. She jerked the wool again, and again the ball rolled farther. She gave an exclamation of annoyance, and Aunt Florence looked up and, following her gaze, saw the strange behaviour of the ball.

‘What is your ball doing, Isabella?’ she gasped. ‘Look at the odd way it is moving!’

Pamela looked, too; and there was the Fairy gaily trundling the ball of wool away, round towards the other side of the tree. Even Aunt Isabella was staring in dumb surprise.

‘What can it be?’ cried Aunt Florence, quite frightened.

‘It must be some creature,’ said Aunt Isabella in an odd tone. ‘It couldn’t go like that of its own accord. The ground is quite level.’

‘Shall I fetch it?’ asked Pamela, trying not to laugh.

‘No! no!’ exclaimed Aunt Florence. ‘It might bite or sting!’

‘I will see what it is,’ said Aunt Isabella firmly, and she followed the wool.

The faster Aunt Isabella went, the faster the ball ran. It came right round the tree and rolled towards Aunt

Florence, who, instead of trying to stop it, knelt up on her chair and gave a little scream. 'Don't touch it, Pamela!' she cried, and Pamela stood back and let the triumphant Fairy run on, rolling her ball, which was getting decidedly smaller. Aunt Isabella came striding after.

'It is absolutely incomprehensible!' she exclaimed. (No shorter word would do.) 'Did you see anything as it went past?'

'No! no!' cried Aunt Florence, 'there was nothing to be seen; it must be something right inside! Oh, do take care!'

'Nonsense!' said Aunt Isabella, 'I mean to find out what it is.'

The ball ran right across the grass, then nimbly swerved, mounted the grass bank, and disappeared into the flower bed.

Aunt Isabella made after it, and Aunt Florence and Pamela followed at a little distance. They stood watching while Aunt Isabella valiantly felt along the wool and plunged her hand into a group of poppies.

'Oh, do take care!' exclaimed Aunt Florence again.

Aunt Isabella drew out her hand with a very tiny ball of wool in it—but nothing else. She pulled it this way and that, but there was no sign of the mysterious creature.

'It has got away, of course!' she exclaimed. 'It had got inside, and when the wool unwound so far, of course it escaped. How very annoying!'

'But what could it have been?' exclaimed Aunt Florence, who was feeling decidedly relieved that the creature *had* got away.

The Aunts, holding their skirts well round them, peered into the flower bed, but did not see the cause of all the disturbance, who was sitting on a carnation, a few inches from their noses, smiling sweetly.

At last Aunt Isabella gave up the search and began winding up her wool, while Aunt Florence followed her, still exclaiming about the mystery of the affair all the way back across the grass and round the tree.

The Fairy looked at Pamela, and her look was thoroughly triumphant. 'She was so surprised, she quite forgot to be cross!' she whispered gleefully. 'I've done Aunt Isabella good at last!'

CHAPTER XII

A N A R R O W E S C A P E

ANYWAY, that was the end of an industrious afternoon, for the Aunts sat discussing the strange happening till tea-time, keeping a sharp look-out all the time for creatures of any sort or size, and starting when even a sparrow hopped near them, while Pamela lolled on the grass bank, unreprieved, with the Fairy beside her. *Home Influence* was entirely forgotten.

After tea, which really passed off quite pleasantly, Pamela was given some sewing to do, and sent into the garden again. She went skipping down the path to the grass bank, with the Fairy flying alongside.

‘ Things get nicer and nicer ! ’ she exclaimed. ‘ Fancy garden all day long ! ’ She sat herself down on the bank and opened out her work. ‘ And Aunt Florence hasn’t given me so very much to do either ! ’

‘ Shall I help ? ’ asked the Fairy. But Pamela somehow felt she ought to do this herself.

‘ It ’s different from yesterday afternoon,’ she explained. ‘ That was all extra because the Aunts were cross. I can easily do this piece myself. But it would make it much *nicer* if you told me a story while I sewed,’ she added in a coaxing tone.

And the Fairy, who was always most obliging, told a delightful story that only ended as Pamela fastened off her last thread.

‘ *Thank* you, Fairy,’ said Pamela, neatly folding up her work and laying it on the grass, ‘ that was a lovely one ! ’

‘ What shall we do now ? ’ asked the Fairy.

‘ Yes, what ? ’ said Pamela.

They both gazed round, considering.

‘Shall we just go round first and visit all the flowers?’ suggested the Fairy. ‘They like a little attention.’

‘Do they know?’ asked Pamela eagerly.

‘Of *course* they do!’ said the Fairy. ‘Every time you walk round and look at the flowers they feel pleased, and when nobody goes round to look at them they feel disappointed and begin to droop their heads.’

‘Oh, let’s go and look at them, every one!’ cried Pamela, jumping to her feet.

So they went slowly along the paths and visited the flowers. And the Fairy hugged the tall delphiniums and lilies, and gently patted the little ones, like pansies, and to ever so many more she gave a friendly touch as she flitted by. But whenever she found a red rose she clung to it, and kissed it, for its sweetness. And Pamela kissed the roses too, and went down on her hands and knees and buried her nose in mignonette, and carnations, and stocks, and felt she loved them more than ever now she knew they wanted to be loved.

‘But don’t they mind being picked?’ she asked the Fairy.

‘Oh no,’ said the Fairy, ‘not if people really want them to make rooms look pretty. Flowers are made sweet and pretty to please people, and as long as they do that they are quite satisfied. It’s only when nobody cares for them they feel they are wasted.’

‘I shall *always* care for flowers!’ declared Pamela earnestly.

Presently Pamela was called in to bed, and she went away, very regretful to leave the garden where everything was looking so beautiful. The Fairy stayed on among the flowers, as she had not had time to visit them all, and she did not want to hurt the feelings even of a double daisy, though, of course, as every one knows, *they*

are not very sensitive. But she promised to come the minute Pamela should wave the pink counterpane out of the window, as a signal that Jane had left the room.

Pamela showed her sewing to Aunt Florence, and both Aunts kissed her good-night without finding any further fault with her. In fact, they felt some approval that she had been so good and quiet ever since they had spoken to her about swinging on the walnut-tree, and they began to hope the strange wildness of the last few days was wearing off.

‘Now, Miss Pamela, you’ll be quick into bed to-night and no nonsense!’ said Jane. And as this suited Pamela very well, she was as quick as she could possibly be, and so everybody was pleased.

Jane tucked in the bed-clothes and said good-night. Pamela just waited till the door was shut, and then, off went the bed-clothes, and out of bed went Pamela and over to the window. She could not see the Fairy, but she waved the pink counterpane vigorously. Next moment, there was the Fairy, flying straight as a dart for the window.

Pamela pattered back to bed, just in case the Aunts should look in to see if she was reading in bed, or doing anything else she ought not, and the Fairy sat on the pillow and whispered another story into her ear until the gong went.

But as soon as the Aunts were in at dinner, and Jane was busy waiting, Pamela had an idea.

‘Wouldn’t you like to go upstairs and see the top floor?’ she asked. ‘You’ve never been there yet.’

‘Oh yes!’ said the Fairy, who was always ready for new things. ‘What is the top floor like?’

‘Oh, it’s most int’esting and different,’ said Pamela. ‘I hardly ever go there, I’m not supposed to go except with somebody, but of course you are somebody!’

‘Of course I am,’ agreed the Fairy.

‘And it’s quite right to be out of bed later to-night,’ observed Pamela, putting on her bedroom slippers, ‘because you see I stayed in bed nearly all the morning.’

The Fairy quite saw, and Pamela turned her door-handle with great caution, and crept up the stairs very slowly and carefully. For though her excuses for going up seemed quite good to herself, she was pretty sure they would not seem equally good to the Aunts.

The Fairy amused herself by walking up on the railing of the bannisters, which is a thing very few people except a Fairy can do.

They arrived at the top floor and looked all round. It was a very small landing, and the ceiling was much lower than the ceilings were downstairs. There were four doors, all shut.

‘That’s Jane’s bedroom!’ whispered Pamela, pointing to the first, ‘and that’s Cook’s!’ pointing to the next; ‘we mustn’t go into them.’ They passed Jane’s and Cook’s doors and Pamela opened the one facing the staircase.

‘This is the box-room,’ she whispered.

‘What a lot of big boxes!’ said the Fairy. ‘What’s inside them?’

‘Nothing,’ said Pamela. ‘They are all empty; they’re for putting your clothes in to take away when you go a journey.’

‘I’m glad I don’t need things like that when I go a journey,’ observed the Fairy. ‘But what’s that funny noise?’

‘That’s the cistern; that thing in the corner,’ said Pamela. ‘It’s the water in it that makes that funny noise. It used to frighten me very much when I was little.’

‘It does sound mysterious,’ said the Fairy.

They stood and listened to the cistern for some minutes, till they felt almost frightened, but not quite, and then they hurried out and shut the door on it.

Pamela put her hand on the handle of the fourth and last door.

‘This is the exciting room!’ she said. ‘Where all Daddy’s things are kept!’

The door of the exciting room was gently opened, and then shut with Pamela and the Fairy inside.

It was a sloping-ceilinged attic, with one little window just where the wall was highest, and it was filled with all sorts and kinds of things, including a strong smell of camphor. Pamela and the Fairy stole about among the boxes and packing-cases and old pieces of furniture and old pictures, and Pamela pointed out the trunks and wooden cases that held her father’s things, and the chest that held the Aunts’ winter clothes, and various other articles of interest.

‘What an *enormous* lot of things they have!’ said the Fairy wonderingly. ‘They must be very rich!’

‘Oh no, I don’t think so!’ said Pamela. ‘I know the Aunts are not rich. There’s something called Income Tax that makes them poor.’

‘Income Tax,’ said the Fairy: ‘I never heard of that.’

‘I don’t quite know what it is,’ said Pamela honestly, ‘but I’ve often heard them talk about it.’

Then they peeped out of the window, Pamela standing on a wooden box and the Fairy standing on her shoulder, and found the garden looking quite strange and far away, from so high up.

And then they inspected the old pieces of furniture, and Pamela tried the drawers one by one, hoping that one might turn out to be unlocked, but none did. Finally she stood on tiptoe to reach a cupboard that stood upon a chest of drawers, and gave a pull at the

door. To her surprise it came open at once, and something fell from a shelf into her very arms.

‘Oh!’ exclaimed Pamela in a tone of delighted astonishment.

‘What is it?’ asked the Fairy.

‘It’s my very own Old Fairy Book!’ said Pamela, ‘that Aunt Isabella took away from me the morning before you came. She must have put it in the cupboard quickly and forgotten to lock it. Fancy its tumbling into my arms like that!’

‘It wants to come back to you,’ said the Fairy.

‘Oh, I wish I could take it! Oh, dare I?’ exclaimed Pamela.

‘Yes,’ said the Fairy. ‘If it’s your very own.’

‘It really is,’ said Pamela. ‘It belonged to Daddy when he was little, and he gave it to me. But Aunt Isabella! she said I wasn’t to read fairy stories any more!’

‘But that was because she said there weren’t any fairies, wasn’t it?’ said the Fairy.

‘Yes,’ said Pamela.

‘Well?’ said the Fairy.

‘Well, but—?’ said Pamela. ‘The Aunts still don’t know.’

‘Perhaps they *will* know, though,’ said the Fairy mysteriously.

Pamela looked at her, and looked at the book. Then she hugged the book to her. ‘I *must* take it!’ she said. ‘Let’s go down quickly now and hide it away!’

But, alas! just as Pamela was on the top step of the stairs, ready to descend, and the Fairy was preparing to slide down the bannisters, they heard a door open and some one come out into the hall, and Aunt Isabella’s voice say, ‘Just bring in the next course, Jane. I will go up and fetch it myself, I must have left it in my other pocket.’

Aunt Isabella was coming upstairs for her handkerchief!

'Oh dear! And my door's open!' gasped Pamela, clutching her rescued book close, and standing quite still with fright.

'Go down quietly!' whispered the Fairy. 'I will make it safe.' Then she shot suddenly over the banisters and was down at the bottom flight of stairs before Aunt Isabella had reached the third step.

Flop! a small picture of Windsor Castle suddenly fell from the wall on to the stair-carpet, almost under Aunt Isabella's feet.

Pamela crept down one step.

Aunt Isabella gave an exclamation of annoyance, and picked up the picture hastily to see if the glass was broken; but luckily it was not.

Pamela crept down two steps.

Aunt Isabella examined the wire, but it was quite whole and strong. Then she inspected the little brass picture-hanger on the wall. It was perfectly firm.

Pamela crept down three steps.

Jane came through the hall, carrying the prunes and custard.

'It is most extraordinary,' said Aunt Isabella to her; 'this picture fell down just now, and I cannot imagine how it happened. There is nothing the matter with either the wire or the hanger!'

'That's odd, mum,' said Jane.

Pamela crept down four steps.

Aunt Florence hurried out from the dining-room. 'Did you say a picture had fallen?' she exclaimed. 'Oh dear! that's a most unlucky thing!'

'Stuff and nonsense!' said Aunt Isabella firmly; 'the only unlucky thing is if the glass is broken, and in this case it is *not*!' and she hung the picture up again with great decision.

Pamela, beckoned on by the Fairy, was down the rest of the stairs, across the landing, and into her room while they were speaking.

She flung herself into bed, book and all, and drew deep breaths of relief. 'Oh, *thank* you, Fairy!' she whispered gratefully. 'That *was* a narrow escape!'

'Pamela evidently got off to sleep early to-night,' said Aunt Florence after dinner. 'She really seemed quite quiet and good all the evening.'

'Yes,' agreed Aunt Isabella. 'I hope we shall have no further trouble with her.'

'This has been a most unsettled week so far,' said Aunt Florence in rather a harassed voice.

'To-morrow things must take their normal course again,' said Aunt Isabella firmly.

But things did nothing of the sort.

CHAPTER XIII

INK AND PENS

‘WE must have lots of fun to-day,’ said the Fairy to Pamela next morning, ‘because this is my last day here.’

‘Oh Fairy, *don’t!*’ said Pamela mournfully. ‘I was trying not to think of it. I shall miss you so dreadfully and be so miserable!’

‘Oh no, you won’t!’ said the Fairy. ‘You won’t miss me, and you won’t be miserable.’

‘I shall!’ said Pamela quite indignantly.

‘No you won’t. I’m not going to tell you why just now, but I promise you you won’t.’

‘When will you tell me why?’ asked Pamela curiously.

‘I’ll tell you just before I go,’ said the Fairy, ‘and that won’t be till late at night, long after you are back in bed again. I need not be back in Fairyland till midnight, so we have all the day before us to enjoy ourselves.’

Pamela longed to know what it was the Fairy was going to tell her that could possibly prevent her from being unhappy when she was left alone again, but she knew that when the Fairy had made up her mind not to tell a thing nothing would make her do so. So she tried to forget about it, and soon caught the infection of gaiety; and long before Jane appeared she was in high spirits.

‘What ever’s the matter with you, Miss Pamela?’ Jane exclaimed when Pamela could hardly stand still to have her hair combed for laughing at the Fairy’s antics on the dressing-table.

‘I’m only happy, Jane,’ Pamela explained with another gurgle of amusement. But Jane was unsympathetic.

‘Well, if it’s being happy makes you behave so,’ she

said in a grim tone, 'you'd better hurry up and be miserable before your Aunts see you!'

But when breakfast time came Pamela was not tempted to disgrace herself by laughing aloud, for something quite sobered the Fairy's spirits for a time. That something was Aunt Florence's dress.

This morning Aunt Florence had put on what she called a summer dress, and it was far, far uglier than her usual serviceable clothes. The material was a thin flannel; in colour it was a magenta-purple, extremely unbecoming to Aunt Florence's complexion, and in shape it was lumpy and bumpy. It was a thoroughly bad dress.

The Fairy looked at her aghast for several minutes when she appeared. Then she retreated behind the marmalade jar, looking quite sad. When the marmalade jar was moved she went to the far side of the loaf of bread from Aunt Florence. Pamela wondered what was wrong.

'What is she wearing to-day?' demanded the Fairy when she and Pamela were alone in the schoolroom afterwards.

'Who?' asked Pamela, surprised.

'Aunt Florence,' replied the Fairy.

'Just a dress,' said Pamela, who was used to it.

'Well, she shouldn't,' said the Fairy emphatically. 'It's shocking to wear a dress like that.'

Pamela began to laugh. 'What would Aunt Florence say if she heard you? She thinks everybody else's dresses *except* hers and Aunt Isabella's are shocking because they are so short.'

'It's *much* more shocking to wear an ugly dress than a short one,' said the Fairy decidedly. 'She mustn't do it. It's enough to spoil the whole day.'

'We can't very well stop her,' said Pamela doubtfully.

'I can,' said the Fairy.

Then Aunt Florence appeared for lessons.

The first was French reading from *Les Malheurs de Sophie*. Pamela always felt that if it had only been in English this would have been a most interesting book. She longed to know what all the exciting-looking pictures were about, but Aunt Florence told her she must read through the book herself to find out. And as they never did more than two or three sentences in a lesson, because of translating them and going over them again and again to get the pronouncing right, Pamela thought it most unlikely that they ever *could* reach the end. And to-day the French language seemed particularly unattractive, and Aunt Florence particularly irritable. But probably no one could have felt amiable in a dress of that colour.

The Fairy sat on the table, turning her back on Aunt Florence in a manner that might have been considered rude if Aunt Florence had been able to see her.

‘Not at all good to-day!’ said Aunt Florence, shutting up the book sharply. ‘Now you must do some writing. We must get in as much as possible this morning, since you missed all your lessons yesterday.’ She spoke rather as if that had been Pamela’s fault, which, of course, it wasn’t. ‘Give me your book and I will set you a copy.’

At the mention of writing the Fairy suddenly turned round and began to take an interest in the proceedings.

Pamela handed over her copy-book, open at a blank page. The pen was leaning up against the inkstand, and Aunt Florence put out her hand for it. The Fairy was up like a flash and, just as Aunt Florence touched it, the pen rolled away from her across the table. Aunt Florence leant over, seized it, drew back her arm, and then—how could it have happened?—the ink-pot was swept off the table and the ink poured all over the front of the magenta-purple dress and all down the skirt on to the floor. No one would have believed that an ink-pot could hold so much ink as Aunt Florence had over her.

She gave an exclamation of horror and jumped up, while ink poured off her.

‘Blotting-paper!’ she cried, but in an instant the blotting-paper was saturated and useless. ‘Oh, how terrible! I must get this dress off at once! Pamela, tell Jane! the carpet!’ And Aunt Florence fled, holding up her dress to prevent ink from dripping on the staircase.

Pamela ran for Jane, and the Fairy was left alone sitting on the table very quiet and good, pensively looking at a piece of india-rubber.

Jane came from upstairs in a great hurry and mopped up the mess and tried to rub away the stains with a damp cloth.

‘It’s all your doing, I suppose?’ she said indignantly to Pamela, but Pamela assured her she hadn’t touched the ink. So Jane was forced to the conclusion that Aunt Florence had upset it herself, and she continued her grumbles in an undertone.

Luckily it was a dark carpet with a bluish pattern, and the ink didn’t show *very* much in the end.

Then Pamela and the Fairy were left alone.

‘Oh, Fairy!’ said Pamela in quite a shocked voice.

The Fairy smiled sweetly. ‘I feel better now,’ she remarked. ‘She can’t ever wear that dreadful dress again. That’s one good deed I’ve done to-day.’ And she looked so pleased with herself that Pamela couldn’t go on being shocked and had to laugh instead.

As lessons had come to an abrupt end for the moment, Pamela and the Fairy soon went over to the window to look out at the garden. And presently the Fairy flew out and called back to Pamela that it was lovely outside. And somehow Pamela’s legs swung over the window-sill, and the next moment she was out. And, once out, the Fairy beckoned her on; and down the garden path they both went and were dancing round the walnut-tree, one

on the grass and one in the air, when Aunt Isabella opened the schoolroom door to ask Aunt Florence if Pamela was ready for her arithmetic lesson.

Aunt Isabella knew nothing of the catastrophe, as she had been in the kitchen ordering dinner when it happened, so when she found an empty schoolroom she stood and stared in amazement.

It took several minutes to find Aunt Florence and hear what had happened, and several more for the two indignant Aunts (Aunt Florence once more attired in her blouse and skirt) to trace Pamela to the bottom of the garden. Then they angrily confronted the truant and demanded to know what she meant by leaving her lessons.

'Oh, lessons! I quite forgot!' said Pamela blankly. And it was perfectly true. Playing with the Fairy had quite driven them out of her mind.

Aunt Isabella's scolding may be better imagined than described. It took a long time, and in the middle Pamela's attention was rather distracted by seeing the Fairy suddenly fly off for the house as if with some purpose in her mind.

At last even Aunt Isabella tired of her lecture, and she led the way back to the schoolroom, Aunt Florence walking next, and Pamela coming last and wondering what the Fairy had been up to in their absence.

When they reached the schoolroom the Fairy was waiting for them, sitting very quietly on the top of the book-case. But she wore her pleased-with-herself expression, as if she had managed to squeeze in another good deed.

'What lessons has she done so far?' asked Aunt Isabella sternly.

'Only French reading,' replied Aunt Florence. 'I was just going to start her with her writing when the ink upset.'

'Then she had better do her writing now,' said Aunt

Isabella. 'All her lessons are to be done as usual, and then when we go out she must have a punishment task to occupy her till lunch-time. She has chosen to go out during lesson-time: therefore lesson-time will continue when she would ordinarily have been out.'

But when the ink-pot had been refilled, and all was ready for a fresh start—the pen was nowhere to be found!

Pamela protested that she had not touched it, and Aunt Florence owned to having touched it, but was sure she had put it back on the table.

'I certainly picked it up off the table,' she said, 'but I am sure I laid it down when the ink upset. I know when I went upstairs I was holding my skirt up with both hands, so I couldn't have had the pen then.'

They hunted all round on the floor, and Pamela crawled under the table, but the pen could not be found.

'Are you *certain* you didn't touch it, Pamela?' asked Aunt Isabella impatiently. But Pamela was perfectly certain.

Aunt Florence went upstairs to make quite sure that she hadn't carried it off after all, but it was not there.

It was most extraordinary how it could have disappeared so completely; and the most annoying part, from the Aunts' point of view, was that there was no other pen-holder to be had, because they themselves always wrote with fountain-pens. (That happened to be the one modern touch about the Aunts.) There was a boxful of nibs, but no holder in which to put them.

Somehow Pamela and the Fairy, unlike the Aunts, seemed to be enjoying themselves very much. Looking for a pen-holder which can't be found doesn't *sound* a very amusing game, but when it is played instead of doing lessons with Aunts, it is better than 'Hunt the Thimble' every time. Pamela crawled round the floor and lay flat on her face to look under every piece of furniture in

the room, while the Fairy fluttered and danced beside her and pretended to look too. But no sign of the pen-holder could be seen. It might have vanished by magic.

At last, when Aunt Isabella was red with anger, and Aunt Florence red with vexation at being blamed by Aunt Isabella, and Pamela red with rolling on the floor and suppressed laughter, and only the Fairy was cool and calm, the search was stopped.

‘This is simply intolerable!’ scolded Aunt Isabella. ‘Look at the clock! Look at the time that has been wasted! Pamela must do her writing in pencil to-day.’

‘But it will spoil the look of her copy-book,’ objected Aunt Florence.

Aunt Isabella glared at her, but as writing was Aunt Florence’s department she said nothing but—‘Get ready for arithmetic, Pamela!’ in a voice that did not promise well for a peaceful arithmetic lesson.

Pamela hastily seized her squared exercise book and sat down in her place again. Aunt Florence left the room, decidedly ruffled. Aunt Isabella took the arithmetic book and dictated the sums Pamela was to do. And the Fairy sat on the far side of the table and looked on.

The first three sums were correctly done, though Aunt Isabella found fault with the untidiness of the figures, which Pamela had really not had time to do neatly. Then, unfortunately, the next was wrong and, when Pamela was set to correct it, it came differently but wrong again. Aunt Isabella’s mouth grew tighter.

‘You are not trying, Pamela,’ she said sharply, rapping the table with the ruler. ‘Put your book aside now. I can’t have my time wasted like this! You must do that sum correctly while we are out. We will have some mental arithmetic now, and I hope you will do better at that.’

But Pamela was never very good at mental arithmetic

at the best of times, and now, when Aunt Isabella started angry and impatient, it was worse than usual. She stumbled over her answers and made the wildest shots, and Aunt Isabella grew more enraged every minute and at last exclaimed in a sarcastic voice: 'We had better try something a baby could answer! What is twice eight?'

And Pamela, who was now quite bewildered by the rapid questions, replied, 'Eighteen,' knowing perfectly well that that was wrong.

This time Aunt Isabella rapped with the ruler, not on the table, but on Pamela's fingers, which happened to be lying there.

Next moment the Fairy was across the table and, pouncing on Aunt Isabella's long, thin wrist, pinched it with all her might and main!

Aunt Isabella gave an exclamation and rose to her feet wrathfully. 'Where is it? What is it?' she exclaimed, brandishing about with the ruler. Needless to say, she did not touch the Fairy, who returned to the other side of the table with a satisfied expression on her face. 'I have been stung or bitten by some creature! Don't sit there doing nothing, Pamela! Get up and help me to look for it!'

Pamela jumped up quickly. 'Does it hurt much?' she asked rather guiltily, though of course she was not to blame.

'Yes, it does,' snapped Aunt Isabella. 'I am not in the habit of making a fuss about nothing. It must be some nasty, poisonous insect. You didn't see anything of the sort about the room, did you?'

'Oh no,' said Pamela truthfully, for she knew an insect has six legs, and the Fairy had only two.

Aunt Isabella shooed all round the room, waving the ruler and beating it upon the furniture to encourage the insect to remove itself; and Pamela skipped round, waving

her arms about with much enjoyment. But, strange to say, the insect was no more forthcoming than the pen-holder had been.

In the middle of the excitement the door opened and Aunt Florence looked in. She gaped with surprise at the sight.

‘What is happening, Isabella?’ she exclaimed.

Aunt Isabella paused in her performance. ‘A poisonous insect! Stung me on the wrist!’ she answered shortly. ‘We are trying to drive it out, in case it is still here.’ And she routed round with the ruler again.

‘Oh dear! What was it like?’ asked Aunt Florence nervously.

‘We did not see it,’ replied Aunt Isabella rather irritably. ‘But there is the mark on my wrist.’ And she showed Aunt Florence the unmistakable little red place where the thing had attacked her.

‘Oh dear!’ said Aunt Florence again. ‘This is the second time this week you have been stung! Do you think it is still in the room?’ and she looked anxiously from side to side.

‘I am beginning to think it must have got away at once,’ said Aunt Isabella, ‘but it is a very extraordinary thing that neither Pamela nor I caught sight of it.’

‘What a lot of strange things seem to be about just now!’ exclaimed Aunt Florence uneasily. ‘There was yesterday afternoon and that extraordinary creature that got into your ball of wool; and then you said you felt something attack your nose the day before. I wonder if it is a particularly bad summer for pests of all sorts?’

‘Very likely,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘Probably due to this unusually long spell of warm weather.’

The Fairy smiled mischievously at Pamela, and Pamela had to turn and hide her smiles from the Aunts by looking out of the window.

‘You know, Isabella, it is after twelve,’ said Aunt Florence, suddenly remembering what had brought her in. ‘We ought to be off to the shops, if we are going.’

‘Good gracious!’ exclaimed Aunt Isabella. ‘After twelve! What a disgracefully wasted morning! Pamela has practically done no lessons at all! However, we can’t wait now. Pamela, do that sum, and—yes, you had better draw a map.’

‘Yes, Aunt Isabella,’ said Pamela in a resigned voice. Drawing maps takes a long time.

‘Draw the map of Italy,’ decided Aunt Isabella. ‘You must get out your things and start it yourself. And *if* it is properly finished before we get back you may go into the garden for a few minutes’ fresh air before lunch. But, remember, you are not to hurry over it. If it is badly done you will have to do it all over again in the afternoon.’

Aunt Florence whispered something to Aunt Isabella. Aunt Isabella hesitated; she certainly had no intention of being really unkind to Pamela. ‘I think that insect must be out of the room,’ she said, ‘but if you feel frightened of it you may sit in the dining-room to do your work.’

‘Oh no, thank you, Aunt Isabella,’ replied Pamela gratefully, ‘I’m not a bit frightened, thank you.’

‘Very well,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘If you should see anything, call Jane, but you are not to neglect your work by looking about.’ And with that the Aunts left the room.

‘That was quite kind of Aunt Isabella, wasn’t it?’ whispered Pamela to the Fairy.

‘Yes,’ whispered back the Fairy mischievously. ‘I expect my discipline did her good!’

‘She didn’t *really* hurt me, you know,’ whispered Pamela.

‘I didn’t *really* hurt her,’ retorted the Fairy, ‘not considering her size!’

Pamela opened her sum book again, and then paused

to ask a question in a hushed voice. 'What *did* you do with the pen?'

'It's in a safe place,' said the Fairy, 'safe from the Aunts, I mean.'

'Do tell me!' said Pamela. But the Fairy only put her finger on her lips and smiled and shook her head.

Pamela settled to work at her sum, and a third answer soon came out. To make quite sure she worked it over again, and actually with the same result. 'I do believe it's right!' she said, quite surprised.

Just then the front door shut with a bang.

'They've gone!' exclaimed Pamela. 'Hurrah! now we can talk. How *lucky* drawing maps is a talking thing—not like writing exercises or learning things.'

'What is drawing maps?' asked the Fairy.

Pamela produced the atlas and showed maps, and also showed her own pencil maps, which were not always *quite* like those in the atlas.

'I hate the very in-and-out ones,' she said; 'they are so difficult—the ins and outs always seem to come so much bigger than they ought to, and then there isn't room for them all. I hope Italy isn't a very in-and-out one.'

They inspected Italy and found it not so bad as some.

'I could do some of that,' said the Fairy, 'if only I had a little pencil. Yours is so huge.'

'I know!' exclaimed Pamela, and ran to a cupboard with a drawer at the top. She scrabbled round the drawer and came back triumphantly holding a programme pencil. She had found it long ago and treasured it. 'Could you draw with this?' she asked.

'Oh yes,' said the Fairy, taking hold of it. It was about as big for the Fairy as a walking-stick for a human being, but, after all, one can draw splendidly on sand with a

walking-stick, and the Fairy drew Italy just as well with the programme pencil.

Pamela started at the Alps and the Fairy started at the Riviera, but she went so much the quicker that, even though she put in Sicily, she met Pamela somewhere in the Adriatic. So then she went back and finished up the top bit.

‘That’s lovely!’ said Pamela admiringly. ‘And we’ve been no time at all! How *very* clever you are!’

‘Now for the garden!’ exclaimed the Fairy, darting off.

‘Oh, wait for me!’ cried Pamela. She shot her books and things away in a manner that would have upset the Aunts greatly if they had been there to see, and next moment out through the window they both went and away down the garden, and had a glorious time, skipping and jumping and laughing and singing as if interrupted lessons and indignant Aunts were entirely forgotten.

It was only just before lunch-time when the Aunts returned. They brought with them a new red pen-holder that delighted Pamela’s heart. The shop happened to be out of dull-coloured pen-holders, so the Aunts had been forced to buy a bright one.

The Fairy smiled her approval and satisfaction.

‘It has been a most unfortunate morning,’ said Aunt Florence rather fretfully, as they sat down to lunch. ‘My purple dress is ruined with those ink-stains!’

‘Have it dyed a deep navy blue or black,’ said Aunt Isabella shortly.

‘I don’t think it is worth dyeing,’ said Aunt Florence. ‘It was not an expensive material, and I have had a good deal of wear out of it. But I might have worn it a good deal more as it was,’ she added, not wishing to make too light of the misfortune.

But Pamela felt glad that Aunt Florence evidently did not mind dreadfully about her dress.

The Fairy sat upon the biscuit-jar, looking more pleased with herself than ever.

It might just be added here that a few weeks later the old gardener found, growing out of the ground among his lettuces, a brown pen-holder with a rusty top and nib. As it was no longer of any use, and he was a man who minded his own business, he said nothing, but burnt it in his next bonfire.

CHAPTER XIV

BROWNIES AND COWS

‘**T**HURSDAY afternoon, Jane’s afternoon out!’ remarked Aunt Florence after lunch. She and Aunt Isabella were sitting together in the drawing-room. Pamela and the Fairy were out in the garden, the sum and the map having been inspected and approved of.

‘I had not forgotten,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘But Pamela must certainly have her walk. Do you realize that she has not been out with Jane once this week, and only once to the village with us in the morning?’

‘I know,’ said Aunt Florence. ‘Everything has seemed so unsettled lately!’

‘Pamela’s cutting her hair off on Monday morning was no reason why the whole routine of the house should be upset for days afterwards,’ declared Aunt Isabella. ‘And yet that is what has happened. It is perfectly ridiculous!’

‘I know,’ said Aunt Florence again. ‘But it is Pamela who is not the same. I don’t mean only in appearance. Her whole nature seems to have changed. She is becoming almost a—a *lively* child! She never used to be that!’

‘I can’t make her out at all,’ said Aunt Isabella, frowning at having to admit so much. ‘Last night I thought she had really settled down to normal behaviour again, but to-day she seems as bad as ever, leaving her lessons and rushing off to play in the garden simply because you had had an accident with the ink! I cannot understand her *thinking* of doing such a thing!’

‘And not a sign of repentance about her afterwards!’ said Aunt Florence. ‘Look at the way she was careering about the garden when we came back before lunch!’

‘And yet she had done her work remarkably well,’ owned Aunt Isabella. ‘The sum was correct, and the map was by far the best she has ever drawn. I am amazed she could have done it like that in the time.’

‘It *was* a good map,’ agreed Aunt Florence. ‘Perhaps she is going to improve now at drawing.’

‘The important thing at the moment is for her to improve in behaviour!’ said Aunt Isabella firmly. ‘And first she must be got back into ordinary ways again, and as quickly as possible. This morning was a series of unfortunate accidents that could not be helped. This afternoon she must have her walk as usual, and then do her work after tea. I am quite ready to take her.’

‘I will come too,’ said Aunt Florence. ‘I think a walk will do me good; I am getting a little worried about my weight. I will call her in.’

They left the drawing-room and Aunt Florence went into the schoolroom, to call from the window if Pamela was in sight.

Pamela was in sight, but when Aunt Florence saw her she called back to Aunt Isabella instead.

‘Isabella! just look at her now!’

Aunt Isabella came, frowning, and looked. There was Pamela coming up the path towards the house, skipping and hopping in a manner that looked most extraordinary to the Aunts. She was really trying to learn a new dancing-step from the Fairy, who was doing it up the path in front of her. As the Aunts gazed the Fairy suddenly tired of the ground and flew up and back in the direction of the walnut tree. Pamela began racing after her.

Aunt Isabella rapped sharply on the window. ‘Pamela!’ she called, ‘come in at once to get ready for your walk!’

Pamela and the Fairy both heard the call and turned to see the Aunts' grave faces at the window.

'They don't look as if they like dancing either!' said the Fairy, circling back. 'What *queer* people Aunts are!'

Pamela wished the Aunts had not been watching just then, and she walked sedately back to the house wondering what they would say.

But the Aunts had gone upstairs, feeling they really did not know *what* to say next.

On the landing Aunt Isabella merely remarked to Aunt Florence: 'A good long walk is what she needs—she has not had enough exercise lately to use up her energy in a sensible manner.'

And Aunt Florence hoped Aunt Isabella was right, as really the child seemed so very peculiar that it was quite disturbing.

As Pamela stood on the doorstep, the Fairy on her shoulder, waiting for the Aunts, she heard a clattering of feet and a chattering of voices coming down the road.

'The Brownies!' she cried joyfully, and ran down to the gate.

'Brownies?' said the Fairy, puzzled. 'Brownies are a kind of fairies.'

'These are little girl Brownies,' explained Pamela. 'There is a sort of band of them, and they are dressed in brown, and they go out together and have lovely times, and play games, and sing songs, and do useful things, and—and they do a good deed every day.' Pamela was quite out of breath trying to explain all about the Brownies before they came near.

The Fairy was so pleased that she smiled all over her face. 'That is like real Brownies,' she said. 'Fancy, they are acting being sort of fairies!'

Along came the Brownies, all as gay as possible, clustering round their leader, and evidently off for a picnic.

They saw Pamela watching from the gate and some of them smiled at her, but they little knew that a real Fairy was looking at them too.

Just as they passed the Aunts came out of the house and looked disapprovingly after the little procession.

'Noisy, tiresome children! I cannot understand their mothers letting them run wild like that,' said Aunt Isabella.

'That grown-up girl who is with them ought to keep them quiet, but she appears to encourage them,' said Aunt Florence.

'Of course she does,' snapped Aunt Isabella. 'Surely you know by now that the modern child is encouraged and spoilt in every possible way! Just look at them! What possible good can come of all this dressing up and nonsense!'

'They do a good deed every day,' put in Pamela earnestly.

'We were not asking your opinion, Pamela,' said Aunt Isabella, determined that there should be one child at least in Merlinton who would not be encouraged and spoilt.

'I have never seen any of their good deeds,' said Aunt Florence, not considering that she had really seen very little of them at all.

'The whole thing is an excuse for idle enjoyment and making a noise,' said Aunt Isabella decidedly.

The Fairy looked at the Aunts every bit as disapprovingly as the Aunts looked at the Brownies. However, she stayed quietly where she was.

'Where shall we go?' asked Aunt Florence after the Brownies had disappeared from view.

'A good long walk into the country,' declared Aunt Isabella, who firmly intended to walk the nonsense out of Pamela.

‘Oh, please may we go down the lane and into the fields?’ asked Pamela eagerly. ‘I never go that way with Jane.’

‘No,’ said Aunt Isabella, ‘that is exactly the way those foolish children are going. I don’t wish to see anything more of them.’

‘We might go up to the top of Robins’ Road and out towards the fields that way,’ said Aunt Florence. ‘We are less likely to meet people,’ she murmured to Aunt Isabella. And Aunt Isabella, remembering Tuesday morning in the village and the remarks on Pamela’s improved appearance, agreed to this.

They walked all along their own road, past White House School, and turned up to the right. Soon they reached the entrance to a field-path. Pamela did not dare to ask, but she did hope they might go along it—it looked so green and inviting.

‘It would be cooler along there,’ said Aunt Florence, who felt the heat.

‘I suppose that path would do as well as another,’ said Aunt Isabella ungraciously.

And to the joy of Pamela and the Fairy they were soon walking in the jolliest field all scented with clover. To the left there was a tall hedge, with here and there a late wild rose showing, and blackberry bushes covered with white blossom, and travellers’ joy trailing up ever so high. Along under the hedge grew bracken, and tall cow-parsley, and purple vetches, all among the long grasses.

The Aunts walked ahead, talking of dull grown-up matters, and Pamela and the Fairy strayed along a safe distance behind, whispering and laughing and playing pranks, and revelling in being in the real country.

The Fairy kept diving into the tangle of grass where she was completely hidden, and Pamela parted long



THE FAIRY KEPT
DIVING INTO THE
TANGLE OF GRASS

grass and bracken clumps hunting for her in vain till she heard a little call some way ahead or behind, as the case might be, and there would be the Fairy, swarming gaily up the tallest cow-parsley plant she could find, and crowing with joy at having puzzled Pamela once more.

It was a beautiful summer afternoon, the kind that makes you feel happy all over. Pamela skipped and danced about and forgot the Aunts entirely, and presently lay down in the grass and rolled over and over in enjoyment just like a puppy. Unfortunately this was the moment the Aunts chose to remember Pamela again, and look round.

Pamela jumped up hastily, feeling their eyes on her, and the Fairy whispered mischievously: 'Pamela, *what* are you doing?' just one instant before the Aunts said the same thing.

'Just playing,' said Pamela, with as solemn a face as she could manage.

'Surely you can play without behaving like a wild animal,' said Aunt Isabella severely.

'Just look at your frock!' exclaimed Aunt Florence, 'all covered with green stains! You are not fit to be seen now!'

Pamela looked down at her blue linen, and there certainly were some green marks on it.

'You are a most naughty, tiresome child!' said Aunt Isabella. 'Walk in front now, so that we may see what you are doing.'

'You are getting too old to behave like a baby,' added Aunt Florence.

Pamela did not care to be told she was behaving like a baby—it was much better to be like a wild animal—so she walked along rather solemnly in front of the Aunts.

The Fairy, being invisible, continued to behave as

she pleased. She fluttered up and down just in front of Pamela, singing this little song:

‘ Hey, derry, derry!
Pamela Perry
All in the clover
Rolled over and over.
Covered with green,
Not fit to be seen!
Hey, derry, derry!
How terrible, very,
Of Pamela Perry
To roll in the green!’

—till at last Pamela had to laugh again, but in a stifled sort of way, so that the Aunts shouldn’t hear. Luckily they did not hear the Fairy’s song either, or, if they did, thought it was the twittering of some little bird.

Pamela walked along steadily, not looking behind, and the distance between her and the Aunts increased, for they walked slowly, deep in conversation again about parish matters.

‘ Go faster,’ said the Fairy, and Pamela went faster.

Presently she came to an attractive-looking stile leading into another field. She hesitated and looked back, but the Aunts were far behind and were not looking at her.

‘ Get over!’ said the Fairy. ‘ There are the Brownies! Let’s go and see what they are doing!’

It was a large field, and in the far corner there were the Brownies playing a running game.

Pamela climbed the stile quickly and hurried on out of the Aunts’ sight.

In the field some cows grazing lifted up their heads and solemnly stared at Pamela and the Fairy. For, of course, cows see fairies.

When the Aunts reached the stile and saw Pamela

far ahead in the next field they called indignantly to her to come back. But she was too far off to hear. They waited for a time for her to look round, so that they might beckon to her; but the Fairy carefully warned Pamela *not* to look. So, at last, very hot and angry, they had to climb the stile, a thing they had not done for years. They saw Pamela stop near the group of running, shouting Brownies, and they hurried as fast as they could to drag her away from the neighbourhood of those unsuitable companions.

And then the Fairy had one of her ideas.

‘I’ll give these Brownies a good deed to do, and just show the Aunts how nice they are!’ she whispered to Pamela, and was off before Pamela could ask what she meant.

She flew to the nearest cow, perched between her horns, and whispered in her ear. The cow moved gently towards the Aunts, swishing her tail.

‘Isabella!’ exclaimed Aunt Florence, seeing the cow coming.

‘Don’t be foolish, Florence!’ said Aunt Isabella, and walked on.

The Fairy flew to a second cow and whispered in her ear. She advanced to meet the Aunts also.

‘Isabella!’ gasped Aunt Florence.

‘Keep perfectly calm!’ said Aunt Isabella, but at the same time she slackened her pace and tried to avoid the cows by slanting away to the right. But when a third cow and then a fourth, also instructed by the Fairy, came amiably along and headed them off in that direction, the Aunts stopped dead.

‘Come back! Come back!’ cried Aunt Florence agitatedly.

‘Nonsense!’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘Cows are perfectly harmless creatures.’

‘Not always!’ exclaimed Aunt Florence, trembling.

‘The great thing is to stand firm and show no fear,’ said Aunt Isabella resolutely, trying to quell the nearest cow with the power of the human eye.

But the next cow, not being quelled, or perhaps being again encouraged by the Fairy, came forward, almost trotting.

Aunt Isabella retreated a few steps, and Aunt Florence clung to her and gave a sudden scream.

This roused the Brownies, who perceived in a moment what was happening in their field. They didn’t mind cows a bit themselves, but here, evidently, were two people who did. With encouraging shouts they ran to the rescue, almost tumbling over one another in their keenness to do good deeds to Aunt Isabella and Aunt Florence. Their leader laughingly followed them, but she knew her pack would be equal to the occasion. And Pamela ran with the Brownies.

Real brownies the cows knew and understood, but little girl Brownies were too much for them. They had come up to look at the two largest human beings, as the Fairy had told them; they had not thought much of them, and now they were quite content to turn and trot off to another part of the field. Followed by triumphant Brownies, they retired to a safe distance, where they began to crop grass again, hoping those annoying, hopping, and skipping things would go right away and leave them in peace.

The Aunts stood alone and safe in the middle of the field, calling to Pamela to come back. But Pamela, full of delight at sharing an adventure with the much envied Brownies, was quite unconscious of their calls and followed the cows as far as any one. Then she walked back, chattering away with the other children and feeling quite at home.

‘Well done!’ said the Brownie leader to her. ‘You ought to be a Brownie too.’ And Pamela’s heart swelled with pride and pleasure.

‘I should *love* to!’ she said earnestly.

The leader went up to the Aunts and said how sorry she was they had had a fright. ‘The cows are really perfectly harmless,’ she said. ‘They only meant to be friendly. But of course it is rather alarming to have such great creatures coming close,’ she added tactfully.

‘I assured my sister they were harmless,’ said Aunt Isabella, who did not like to be accused of nervousness. ‘But at the same time I do not care for cows to be too friendly. I prefer them to keep their distance, and I am much obliged to you and all these—er—children for driving them away.’

‘Yes, indeed, we are most grateful,’ said Aunt Florence, who was secretly longing to get out of the field as soon as possible.

‘Oh, they enjoy being of use,’ said the leader. ‘And your little niece, isn’t it? did as much as any one.’ She knew the Aunts by sight, and Pamela too, and had often pitied the solitary little girl who usually looked so quiet and grave. So, at the risk of being snubbed, she added: ‘I suppose you wouldn’t like her to join our Brownies, would you? It is really the White House Pack, but we have one or two children who don’t go to the school, and we should love to have her if you cared to let her join?’

Pamela held her breath for one moment of wild hope.

‘No, thank you,’ said Aunt Isabella stiffly and decidedly. ‘It is very good of you to suggest it, but we shouldn’t care for it for Pamela. Say “thank you”, Pamela, and then we must be going on.’

Pamela looked up and murmured, ‘Thank you very much’ with such a disappointed face that the leader felt dreadfully sorry for her.

Good-bye,' she said, shaking her warmly by the hand, but not daring to say aloud how sorry she was for fear of offending the disapproving-looking Aunts. 'I'm glad we met this afternoon, anyway.'

And Pamela smiled shyly, and went away cheered and uplifted by her kindness and the friendly smiles and good-byes of the Brownies.

The Fairy had been watching the proceedings with interest, and now perched on Pamela's shoulder once more as she walked beside the Aunts to the farther gate.

Once through the gate, Aunt Isabella turned to Pamela.

'Pamela, you know perfectly well you had no business to climb that stile and go on by yourself as you did. You are responsible for this ridiculous and annoying adventure, and if you had not done something to atone by helping to drive off those cows, we should have been seriously angry.'

But Pamela had walked and talked with Brownies and shaken hands with their leader, and to her it had been a glorious adventure.

The Fairy was pleased too. 'Those are nice, nice, *nice* people,' she whispered to Pamela, 'and they *are* like fairies!'

And, to tell the truth, the Aunts, particularly Aunt Florence, came home having a much higher opinion of Brownies than when they started out.

CHAPTER XV

ASTONISHED AUNTS

WHEN tea was over, Pamela was sent off to the schoolroom to do her copy. She settled herself down, determined to show the Aunts that a red pen writes better than a brown one. In fact she was trying so hard that the tip of her tongue appeared out at the corner of her mouth, a thing Aunt Florence *never* allowed.

‘How doth the little busy bee,’ ‘How doth the little busy bee,’ she wrote very carefully, one under the other. ‘Improve each shining hour’ came over on the opposite page. That would be done to-morrow. She had read the whole out to the Fairy, who quite approved of it.

‘*We’ve* been improving each shining hour,’ she said. ‘I think we’ve been improving them very much, don’t you?’

‘Oh yes, we *have*!’ agreed Pamela heartily.

‘When the Aunts kept calling me a poisonous insect, they didn’t know I was a little busy bee!’ chuckled the Fairy. ‘And Aunt Florence evidently likes *them*, else she wouldn’t write things about them.’

When Pamela had finished all the ‘How doth the little busy bee’s, all down the page without a single blot or crooked line, she jumped up in triumph. ‘I’ll just show it to Aunt Florence and then I expect we can go out. Wait for me a minute!’ and she ran off with her copy-book to the drawing-room.

Presently she returned, looking pleased.

‘She said it was very good, and I may go out in the garden till bed-time. That’s a whole hour!’

‘And it’s a lovely shining one!’ cried the Fairy. ‘Come along and improve it!’ and she flew straight out

of the window and down the garden, swift as a swallow, Pamela following as fast as her legs could carry her.

They improved the hour with all kinds of games, and the last was follow my leader, with the Fairy for leader. Of course, flying was not allowed, but even without that Pamela found some difficulty in following everywhere the Fairy led; for naturally a fairy can go very easily through places where a little girl is inclined to stick. But she refused to give in and always managed to wriggle through somehow.

It was just when she was crawling out through the gooseberry bushes that the Aunts came out to look for her.

They exclaimed loudly at the sight of her, as she hastily jumped to her feet. Her hands were dirty. Her dress was dirty, with green stains here, and earthy ones there. Her stockings had holes in both knees. And her hair was all tossed and tousled. She looked a picture of health and happiness all the same, but the Aunts did not notice that.

Aunt Isabella was greatly annoyed to find that, after all, the nonsense had not been walked out of Pamela. 'What are you doing, you *disgraceful* child?' she said sternly.

'Just look at your dress! And your stockings!' exclaimed Aunt Florence in horrified tones.

'Have you been eating gooseberries?' demanded Aunt Isabella.

'Oh no!' said Pamela, 'I really haven't. I was only crawling through.'

'And why?' asked Aunt Isabella icily. 'When there is the whole garden to walk in, why crawl through the gooseberry bushes?'

'It was a sort of game,' said Pamela.

'You naughty child!' cried Aunt Florence suddenly.

‘That is your clean dress! And I *told* you to put on your overall.’

Pamela looked rather guilty. ‘I’m very sorry,’ she said. ‘I came out in such a hurry, I quite forgot. I did mean to put it on.’

‘Forgetting is no excuse for disobedience, Pamela,’ said Aunt Isabella, frowning.

‘That is the second dress you have dirtied to-day!’ said Aunt Florence.

‘No, Aunt Florence,’ said Pamela eagerly, ‘it is the same one.’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Aunt Florence. ‘You had a clean dress on at tea. I particularly noticed. You had ruined the other by rolling in the grass this afternoon. Did you change back again after tea?’

Pamela hesitated. The Fairy whispered very gently in her ear, ‘Tell her!’

‘It was always the same dress,’ Pamela explained. ‘Only I had it dry-cleaned before tea.’

‘Dry-cleaned! What nonsense! What do you mean?’ said Aunt Isabella impatiently.

‘There is no benzine or petrol in the house,’ declared Aunt Florence. ‘Nasty dangerous stuff!’

‘What do you mean?’ said Aunt Isabella again.

‘It was dry-cleaned,’ repeated Pamela, looking round for further help from the Fairy.

‘Don’t stare about in that vacant way!’ said Aunt Isabella sharply. ‘Answer my question properly.’

The Fairy whispered very softly again. The Aunts evidently heard nothing, or else thought it was the sound of leaves stirred by the tiny breeze.

‘I can’t explain any more,’ said Pamela. ‘But it can be done again. Just look!’

And then the most extraordinary thing happened before the Aunts’ very eyes—the most extraordinary thing

they had ever seen in all their lives. Pamela stood quite still in front of them, and the stains on her dress began slowly to disappear as if of their own accord!

The Aunts were so much astonished that they both rubbed their eyes and looked again. But it was no illusion. The stains were simply gradually vanishing away, and in a minute or two the dress was as spotless as a dress on Monday morning. The Aunts stood staring, too much surprised to speak.

But that was not all. *The holes in Pamela's stockings began to darn themselves.* One after the other, they drew together slowly but surely, and presently there was not a pin-point of bare knee to be seen.

And last of all Pamela's hair grew smooth and tidy, and her hands became pink and clean.

The Aunts stood staring at the transformed Pamela, and Pamela stood gazing back at them, wondering what they would say to this work of the unseen Fairy.

'What is it, Pamela? Speak! What is it?' asked Aunt Florence quite wildly.

But even at this moment of shock Aunt Isabella meant to keep her dignity. 'Pamela,' she said, 'it is after your bed-time. Go in at once. I will come up and talk to you when you are in bed.'

When Pamela had disappeared from sight the Aunts, who had stood staring after her, turned and stared at each other.

'Isabella! What can it be? Did we really see it?' asked Aunt Florence.

'We did see it,' said Aunt Isabella. 'There is some extraordinary mystery here.'

The Aunts walked up and down the garden, and up and down, talking of the amazing thing they had seen.

About half an hour later Aunt Isabella went up to Pamela's room. As she went in, the Fairy, who had been

giving Pamela some instructions, flew off out of the window to visit the flowers. Aunt Isabella sat down on the bed.

‘Now, Pamela,’ she said very calmly, ‘tell me all about it.’

Pamela felt rather nervous before the task of explaining the Fairy to Aunt Isabella, but took courage on finding she was not looking angry at all, only rather strange and not so forbidding-looking as usual. So bit by bit Pamela told her everything.

Aunt Isabella listened without any interruption or exclamations of astonishment. At the end she looked at Pamela steadily.

‘You tell me that a Fairy—actually *a Fairy*—has been staying with you in this house for three days?’

‘Yes,’ nodded Pamela. ‘Really and truly!’

‘I can see you believe what you are saying,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘But I find it impossible to believe it.’ She spoke just as if she were speaking to another grown-up person.

‘The Fairy said that if you want to see her, will you and Aunt Florence go down the garden to the walnut tree to-night at ten o’clock.’

‘Down the garden to the walnut tree to-night at ten o’clock!’ repeated Aunt Isabella. ‘But if there is such a thing as a Fairy to be seen, why cannot we see her in the house?’

‘She says you could never see her except in the garden and by the light of the moon,’ said Pamela. She did not add that the Fairy had said there was only a chance the Aunts might see her then; that it all depended on whether they had one little bit of youth left in their hearts.

Aunt Isabella got up and walked up and down the room in silence. Her astonishment was very great.

Pamela suddenly jumped out of bed and ran to the

chest of drawers. She pulled open the top drawer and came back holding out the Old Fairy Book.

‘When we were upstairs last night I opened the cupboard door, and it fell out, and I took it,’ she told Aunt Isabella honestly.

‘That was very naughty of you,’ said Aunt Isabella mechanically, taking the book from her. But she scarcely seemed to be thinking of what Pamela told her just then.

Pamela slipped back into bed, and Aunt Isabella went on walking up and down. Presently she paused by Pamela’s bed.

‘I must think this over,’ she said. ‘I must go and talk to Aunt Florence.’ Then she glanced at the book she was still holding. ‘You may keep the book,’ she added, ‘since you told me about it.’ She kissed Pamela good-night more kindly than usual, and hurriedly left the room.

The Old Fairy Book lay on the little table beside the bed; but, though it was some time before the Fairy came flying in again, Pamela did not touch it. Aunt Isabella’s kindness made her feel very glad and grateful.

To Aunt Florence’s disappointment, Aunt Isabella refused to tell her anything until she had changed for dinner. As a matter of fact she felt she wanted a few minutes in which to collect her thoughts and try to understand what she had heard. But the more she thought, the more perplexed she was. Just as she was dressed the gong went, so Aunt Florence had to wait with what patience she could until dinner was over; for nothing was to be said before Jane.

When they went into the drawing-room afterwards Aunt Isabella repeated the extraordinary story Pamela had told her, and Aunt Florence listened, astonished, unbelieving, and alarmed, all at the same moment.

‘But Isabella! A Fairy! It can’t be true!’ she exclaimed again and again.

‘I don’t say it is true,’ said Aunt Isabella. ‘I am simply telling you what the child told me. And she believed it.’

‘But you don’t believe it! You can’t! It’s impossible!’ cried Aunt Florence.

‘I don’t know what to believe,’ said Aunt Isabella slowly. ‘I should have said what we saw in the garden this evening was impossible. But it happened.’

The two Aunts sat for a long while, sometimes talking in troubled tones, sometimes thinking in silence. They felt that their orderly, uneventful lives were being disturbed, and they did not like the feeling. Every now and then they looked at the clock; but neither mentioned to the other the thought that was in their minds then—would they go down the garden to the walnut tree that night at ten o’clock?

CHAPTER XVI

THE FAIRY FLIES AWAY

NO pink silk counterpane was lying on the window-sill in Pamela's room to-night.

Pamela and the Fairy were having their last talk, in the slowly gathering twilight. The Fairy was in a more serious mood than usual. Perhaps she was feeling sorry to be going away.

'If I *could* give you three wishes before I go away, what would you choose?' she asked.

'Is it a kind of pretending game?' asked Pamela in rather a sad little voice.

'It's an imagining game,' said the Fairy. 'Because sometimes when you imagine things very hard they come true.'

'Do they?' said Pamela. 'But I've imagined and imagined about going to school, and it hasn't ever come true.'

'But perhaps it will one day,' said the Fairy. 'Is going to school your first wish?'

'Oh yes!' said Pamela.

'One,' said the Fairy, doubling down a tiny finger as if to remind herself. 'And what is your second?'

'To be a Brownie!' said Pamela promptly.

'Two,' said the Fairy, doubling down another finger. 'And now one more. But be careful, because the third is always the last.'

'Why must it be?' asked Pamela.

'Because it always is,' said the Fairy. 'And because three is the lucky number. And because fairies think people who ask for more than three things at a time are greedy and don't deserve any at all.'

‘I see,’ said Pamela. ‘May I think a little before I say the third?’

‘Yes,’ nodded the Fairy.

There was silence for a few moments.

‘Well,’ said the Fairy, ‘have you thought?’

‘I’ve been thinking,’ said Pamela, ‘and I’m not quite sure. It won’t count if I say it aloud to you first, will it?’

The Fairy promised it wouldn’t count.

‘I mustn’t wish for Daddy to come home, because he says he can’t leave his work yet. So that’s no good. Then there’s my hair. I *should* like it to stay short. I used to think if I could have bobbed hair, and go to school, and be a Brownie, I should be perfectly happy. But now there’s something else I think I want more than bobbed hair. Yes, I do want it more,’ she added earnestly. ‘I am to say what I really and truly wish?’

‘Yes, really and truly,’ said the Fairy.

‘Then,’ said Pamela, a little shyly, because she was not sure whether the Fairy would laugh at this wish, ‘I wish the Aunts would love me.’

But the Fairy did not laugh at all. ‘That’s a very wise last wish,’ she said. ‘And that’s three,’ she added, curling down a third finger. ‘I shan’t forget.’

And though Pamela did not altogether believe that the Fairy could give her those wishes, some dreaming bit of her believed it, and she felt partly comforted.

‘Fairy,’ she began, and then hesitated for words to say what she meant. ‘I—I wish I could say a million thank-yous.’

‘I understand,’ said the Fairy, ‘without your saying *quite* a million,’ and she gave a funny little sound that was half a laugh and half a sigh. ‘And now,’ she went on, ‘I will tell you why you won’t miss me when I go away.’

Pamela looked with large inquiring eyes. In the

fading light she could no longer see the Fairy's features clearly.

'You won't remember me,' said the Fairy simply.

'Oh, Fairy!' cried Pamela reproachfully, 'how can you say that? Of *course* I shall!'

'No,' said the Fairy, shaking her head. 'After twelve o'clock to-night, when I reach Fairyland, you will forget me. It has to be like that.'

'But that is much, much worse,' said Pamela, almost ready to cry. 'I would far rather remember you even if I'm mis'erable.'

'No,' said the Fairy, shaking her head again. 'It is the best way really. And it isn't quite forgetting either, though it's difficult to explain. You won't remember me in your head, but you will remember me in your heart.'

'I don't understand,' said Pamela, looking very much puzzled.

'Never mind,' said the Fairy. 'There are ever so many things people don't understand; but they are true all the same.'

'But shan't I ever see you again?' said Pamela.

'I can't tell you that, because I don't know,' said the Fairy. 'Perhaps you may see me again some day.'

The light in the room had become so dim that Pamela could hardly see the Fairy at all.

'It's growing late and I must go now. Be happy, Pamela! Good-bye!' and the Fairy flew towards Pamela and kissed her forehead. 'Go to sleep now!'

Pamela dropped her head back drowsily on her pillow. 'Good-bye, Fairy,' she murmured. Next moment she was sound asleep.

'Be happy, Pamela!' said the Fairy again, and away she flew, out into the summer night.

* * * * *

There was a bright moon towards the south, and,



THEY SAW THE FAIRY AT LAST. . .

though it was ten o'clock, the daylight had not yet entirely faded away from the northern sky.

The Aunts walked down through the grey and white mystery that was the flower-garden by day, towards the walnut tree, which stood up dark and beautiful 'against the sky. The moths that fluttered past their faces seemed the only living things in this strange evening world. Aunt Isabella walked with a firm step, and her face was set and determined-looking. Aunt Florence felt her heart beating fast with excitement and trepidation, but she did not dare to break the wonderful silence all around them. They went down the steps on to the grass, and then stood, looking about them rather uncertainly.

For a little while they saw and heard nothing. Then—perhaps it was the magic of the evening having its way with them—they gradually made out a tiny light figure against the darkness of the tree. They came nearer to it, and held their breath for amazement. They saw the Fairy at last!

She stood, perfectly silent, poised on the end of a bough, just on a level with their faces, and the Aunts remained silent too.

And then—it was very strange—but as the Aunts stood and gazed at the Fairy, and she gazed at them, they began to remember things forgotten for many, many years. They remembered when they were children, and played in this very garden and round this very tree, two sisters and a little brother all playing together. They remembered their games and their quarrels, their happy times and their troubles, and their very feelings and thoughts. And all these unaccustomed memories hurt and softened their hearts at the same time. And then, though the Fairy still said no word, they began thinking of Pamela—the little girl of their little brother who used to play with them—and of how she had to play in the garden all alone.

And while they were thinking of Pamela the Fairy suddenly spread her wings and flew away into the darkening air, and away and away to Fairyland.

* * * * *

One! two! three! four! five! six! seven! eight! nine! ten! eleven! twelve! said the grandfather clock in the hall.

Pamela roused out of her sleep and turned over drowsily.

‘I’ve been dreaming about a Fairy,’ she murmured to herself. ‘How lovely!’ And she fell fast asleep again.

And the Aunts, who were sitting talking in the school-room, quite started.

‘Why, Isabella, it is twelve o’clock!’ exclaimed Aunt Florence.

‘So it is!’ said Aunt Isabella, consulting her wrist-watch. ‘I had no idea we had talked so late! What was it we were talking of when the clock struck?’ she asked, looking rather puzzled.

‘How odd!’ said Aunt Florence. ‘I can’t remember exactly. It was something to do with the long ago days when we were children, I think.’

‘Yes,’ said Aunt Isabella, ‘I suppose it was that.’ But she still looked puzzled, as if something was escaping her memory that she would have liked to recall. Then she gave herself a little shake. ‘We came in here to look at the garden in the moonlight,’ she added. ‘And I suppose it made us sentimental. Now we really must go to bed!’

And she pulled down the blind decisively.

CHAPTER XVII

THE END OF THE STORY

SOME weeks later, after holidays had begun, Pamela was playing out in the garden one morning, and swinging on the walnut tree. Her Teddy Bear, still in the blue voile dress, lay sprawling on the grass bank near by, looking as if all danger of being sent to a hospital was over.

Pamela had no idea what made her start this new swinging game, but it had become one of her favourite plays when she was alone; and the Aunts did not seem to mind her doing it at all; they did not seem to mind her doing quite a lot of things nowadays.

In fact the Aunts were much kinder and nicer than they used to be, and sometimes they even played games themselves; not running games, of course, but games suitable for their years. The first time Aunt Florence played 'catch' with the new ball she had just given Pamela, and Aunt Isabella came out of the house and joined in, Jane and Cook, as they stared from the kitchen window, could hardly believe their eyes.

'I never would have believed it, not if you told me fifty times!' gasped Jane.

'No more would I!' agreed Cook. 'But it's fine to see them!' she added in a pleased tone. 'Why, Jane, we're none of us so old after all!'

And a morning or two later, Jane came almost running back into the kitchen after taking in breakfast to the dining-room.

'They've shortened their skirts! both of them!' she exclaimed, 'a good two inches, I should say!'

'Wonders will never cease!' said Cook. 'And a good job too!'

But by this time Jane and Cook were so accustomed to

being surprised that hardly anything surprised them any more.

Aunt Isabella, for instance, who never would change her mind about anything, now actually seemed to enjoy changing it. She had changed her mind about Pamela's hair, and it was to stay bobbed after all.

And on this particular morning, while Pamela was swinging on the walnut tree, Aunt Isabella in the drawing-room was changing her mind about some other things. And Aunt Florence, as usual, was agreeing with her.

'Henry' (Henry was Pamela's father) 'says he leaves the decision to us, but he hopes we will let her go,' said Aunt Isabella, looking at the letter in her hand. 'Of course we will do as he wishes.'

'Of course,' said Aunt Florence.

'I must say I think it was pretty interfering of Dr. Langley to write,' went on Aunt Isabella, but she spoke in quite a good-natured tone. 'However, he is an old friend of Henry's, so I suppose we must forgive him.'

'And it was really rather nice of him to take so much trouble about it,' said Aunt Florence.

Presently Pamela was called into the house to hear the result of this discussion.

'Do you remember, Pamela, some weeks ago you told us you wanted to go to school?' asked Aunt Isabella.

'Yes,' said Pamela, a little breathlessly.

'Well, we thought you would like to know that your father is now writing to suggest the same thing. He thinks you must be old enough now to gain by going to school and working with other children.'

'Oh, Aunt Isabella!' exclaimed Pamela excitedly.

'That means you still want it yourself?' said Aunt Isabella, and she was actually smiling.

'Oh yes!'

'Well,' said Aunt Isabella to Aunt Florence, 'since her

father is willing she should go to school, I don't see why we should keep such an unwilling pupil ourselves, do you?'

'Certainly not,' said Aunt Florence.

But both Aunts looked quite pleased about it after all.

Pamela squeezed her hands together hard to make sure that she was really awake. *Could* her dream about school be going to come true? It really sounded like it, for Aunt Isabella was saying something to Aunt Florence about going round to the White House School that morning to settle the matter, as Miss Maxwell, the Head Mistress, had not yet gone away.

Pamela was too much excited to speak, but her face spoke for her; it was perfectly radiant with joy.

'And there is one other thing, Isabella, that you were going to speak to Miss Maxwell about,' said Aunt Florence; 'that is if Pamela would really like it.'

'Oh yes,' said Aunt Isabella, and there was something almost like a twinkle in her eye. 'We haven't forgotten a little adventure we had one afternoon with cows. And if you are really going to White House School in the autumn, Pamela, I suppose you had better do as the other children do; so shall I say you would like to join the Brownies then?'

Pamela gave a great gasp of joy and rushed at Aunt Isabella and hugged her, and then hugged Aunt Florence.

A few minutes later she was out of the house and racing down the garden to work off some of her excitement.

She ran to the walnut tree, jumped for her favourite branch, and swung up and down, up and down, and higher and higher and higher.

'I'm perfectly happy now!' she sang aloud. 'I'm perfectly happy now!'

And, somehow, I expect a little bird carried the news to the Fairy.



A. H. Wab



